

**NICHOLAS OF CUSA:
METAPHYSICAL SPECULATIONS**

**Six Latin Texts
Translated into English**

**by
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**THE ARTHUR J. BANNING PRESS
MINNEAPOLIS**

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 97-72945

ISBN 0-938060-47-3

Printed in the United States of America

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DE BERYLLO
(On [Intellectual] Eyeglasses)
by
NICHOLAS OF CUSA

*(Translated from Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia.
Vol. XI, 1: De Beryllo.
Edited by Hans G. Senger and Karl Bormann.
Hamburg: Meiner Verlag, 1988)*

1

ON [INTELLECTUAL] EYEGLASSES¹ (De Beryllo)

Whoever reads what I have written in my different works² will see that I quite frequently turned to [the topic of] the coincidence of opposites³ and that I frequently endeavored to reach conclusions in accordance with our intellectual insight, which transcends the power of our reason.⁴ Hence, in order that I may now very clearly develop for the reader a [special] conceptualization, I will adduce a mirror and a symbolism by which each reader's frail intellect may be aided and guided at the outer limits of the knowable. And I will set forth a few very weighty opinions⁵ of the men who are the most learned in puzzling matters—set them forth in order that after the mirror and the symbolism have been applied, you, by means of your intellectual insight, may be the judge of the extent to which each [of these men] draws near to the truth.⁶ And even though this present work is seen to be short, it furnishes sufficient practical instruction as to the manner in which, on the basis of the symbolism, we can attain the loftiest insight. Moreover, there will lie within each reader's power [the capability] of applying,⁷ to everything that is [presently] to be investigated, the method [here] adduced.

2

Now, the reason that both Plato, in his letters,⁸ and the great Dionysius the Areopagite⁹ forbade these mystical matters to be disclosed to those who were ignorant of intellectual heights is that to these ignorant ones nothing will seem more derisory than these lofty matters. For the natural man does not apprehend these divine things;¹⁰ but to those who have an intellect that is exercised in these things, nothing will seem more desirable. So if at first glance these divine matters appear to you to be vapid absurdities, know that you are found wanting. But if with the very great desire-for-knowing you continue for a while in your reflections, and if you accept practical instruction from someone who explains to you the symbolism, then you will reach the point at which you will cherish nothing more than that light. Moreover, you will rejoice in having found an intellectual treasure; and you will experience [all] this within a very few days.

Descending now to the topic at hand, I will first explain why I have given to the present work the name "Beryl" and what I intend [thereby].

3

Beryl stones are bright, white, and clear. To them are given both con-

cave and convex forms. And someone who looks out through them apprehends that which previously was invisible. If an intellectual beryl that had both a maximum and a minimum form were fitted to our intellectual eyes, then through the intermediateness of this beryl the indivisible Beginning of all things would be attained. Now, just how this attaining would come about, I propose to explain as clearly as I can, with the help of certain premises that are useful to this end.

- 4 You must first of all take cognizance of the fact that the First Beginning is singular; and according to Anaxagoras it is called Intellect.¹¹ From Intellect all things come into existence in order for Intellect to manifest itself; for it delights in manifesting and communicating the light of its own intelligence.¹² Accordingly, because the Creator-Intellect makes itself the goal of its own works in order for its glory to be manifested, it creates cognizing substances that are capable of beholding its reality [*veritas*]. And the Creator offers itself to these substances in the manner in which they are able to apprehend it as visible. This is the first point to know. In it, all that remains to be said is contained in an enfolded way.
- 5 Know, secondly, that that which is neither true nor truthlike does not exist.¹³ Now, whatever exists, exists otherwise in something else than it exists in itself. For in itself it exists as in its own true being; but in something other [than itself] it exists as in its own truthlike being. For example, in itself heat exists as in its own true being; but in that which is hot it exists by way of a likeness of its hotness. Now, there are three cognitive modes¹⁴—viz., the perceptual,¹⁵ the intellectual, and the intelligential¹⁶—which are called heavens, according to Augustine.¹⁷ The perceptual is present in the senses by way of its perceptual form, or perceptual likeness; and the senses are present in the perceptual by way of their [respective] perceptive form. Likewise, the intelligible is present in the intellect by way of its intelligible likeness; and the intellect is present in the intelligible by way of its intellectual likeness. Similarly, the intelligential is present in the intelligence; and vice-versa. Don't let these terms bother you, for sometimes the intelligential is called the intellectible. But I use the name "intelligential" because of [the relation to] intelligences.
- 6 Thirdly, note the saying of Protagoras that man is the measure of things.¹⁸ With the senses man measures perceptible things, with the intellect he measures intelligible things, and he attains unto supra-intelligible things transcendentally. Man does this measuring in accordance with the aforementioned [cognitive modes].¹⁹ For when he

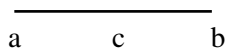
knows that the cognizing soul is the goal of things knowable,²⁰ he knows on the basis of the perceptive power that perceptible things are supposed to be such as can be perceived. And, likewise, [he knows] regarding intelligible things that [they are supposed to be such] as can be understood, and [he knows] that transcendent things [are to be such] as can transcend. Hence, man finds in himself, as in a measuring scale, all created things.²¹

7 Fourthly, note that Hermes Trismegistus states that man is a second god.²² For just as God is the Creator of real beings and of natural forms, so man is the creator of conceptual beings and of artificial forms that are only likenesses of his intellect, even as God's creatures are likenesses of the Divine Intellect. And so, man has an intellect that is a likeness of the Divine Intellect, with respect to creating.²³ Hence, he creates likenesses of the likenesses of the Divine Intellect, even as [a thing's] extrinsic, artificial forms are likenesses of its intrinsic natural form. Therefore, man measures his own intellect in terms of the power of its works; and thereby he measures the Divine Intellect, even as an original is measured by means of its image. Now, this knowledge [of the Divine Intellect] is symbolical knowledge. Yet, man has a very refined power-of-seeing through which he sees that the symbolism is a *symbolism* of the true Reality, so that he knows the true Reality to be a Reality that is not befigurable by means of any symbolism.²⁴

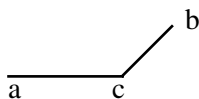
8 Coming, then—now that these few remarks have been set forth—to the topic at hand, let us begin with the First Beginning. That Indian whom Socrates questioned²⁵ derided those who endeavored to understand something apart from God, since God is the Cause and Author of all things. However, we are intent on seeing God as the Indivisible Beginning. Let us apply the [intellectual] beryl to our mental eyes, and let us look out through both the maximum (than which there can be nothing greater) and the minimum (than which there can be nothing lesser), and we will see the Beginning, prior to everything great or small, as altogether simple and as indivisible by any means of division by which any large or small things whatsoever are divisible. And if we look at inequality through the beryl, the object [of our gaze] will be Indivisible Equality; and by way of an absolute likeness we will see the Beginning that is indivisible by any means of division by which a likeness is divisible or variable; i.e., [we will see] the true Reality. For there is no other object of that vision than true Reality, which, by way of any likeness that is both maximal and minimal, is seen to be the absolute First Beginning of every likeness of it.

And so, if we look at division by means of an [intellectual] beryl, the object [of that mental viewing] will be an Indivisible Union. A similar point holds true regarding [the viewing of] proportion and relation and beauty and the like.

- 9 Consider a symbolism of this art of ours, and take in hand a reed, and fold it in the middle, and let the reed be $a b$ and the middle-point c .

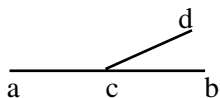


I say that a beginning of a surface and of a two-dimensional angle is a line. Let it be the case, then, that the reed is as a line, and let it be folded at point c , and let $c b$ be movable and be moved in the direction of $c a$.



In this movement, $c b$ in conjunction with $c a$ produces all formable angles. Yet, no angle will ever be so acute that there cannot be one more acute, until $c b$ is joined to $c a$. Nor will any angle be so obtuse that there cannot be one more obtuse, until $c b$ comes to be one continuous line with $c a$. Therefore, when through the beryl you see the maximal and the minimal formable angle, your sight will not land on any angle but rather upon a simple line, which is the beginning of angles—i.e., which is the beginning of two-dimensional angles and is indivisible by any mode of division by which angles are divisible. Accordingly, just as you see this [statement to be true], so through a mirror and by means of a symbolism you may see the absolute First Beginning.

- 10 Consider attentively the fact that through the beryl we attain unto the indivisible. For as long as maximum and minimum are two, you have not at all looked out through both maximum and minimum; for [in the case where they are two] the maximum is not maximal, and the minimum is not minimal. You will recognize this [truth] clearly if you make a movable line, $c d$, to extend from point c .



As long as the line $c d$ constitutes one angle with $c a$ and another angle with $c b$, neither angle is maximal or minimal. For the greater angle can become ever greater to the extent that the other angle still exists. And so, the one angle does not become maximal before the

other becomes minimal. And this [coincidence of maximum and minimum] cannot occur as long as there are two angles. Therefore, if the duality of the angles were to cease, you would see only line *c d* superimposed upon line *a b*, and you would see no angle. And so, both before there are the two [angles] and after there is the simple line: the angle has to be both maximal and minimal; yet, that angle is not depictable. Therefore, the sole beginning is seen to be both maximal and minimal, so that everything which is originated [from it] can be only a likeness of it, since what is originated cannot be either greater or lesser than the beginning. For example, in the case of angles, [this means] that no angle can be so acute that it does not have its acuteness from its beginning; and no angle can be so obtuse that it does not have its obtuse being from its beginning. And so, for any given acute angle, it is necessary that since there can be a still more acute angle, then to create a more acute angle is in the power of its beginning. A similar point holds true regarding obtuse angles. By comparison, we see that the [First] Beginning is eternal and is undepleishable by all that is originated [from it].

11 The Great Dionysius, the disciple of the Apostle Paul, makes the foregoing points elegantly and pithily in Chapter 8 of *The Divine Names*. For he says: “We do nothing other than what was instituted for us [to do] if by means of faint images we ascend to the Author of all things and if, with eyes that are most purified and are higher than the world, we behold all things in the Cause-of-all and behold opposites conjointly and uniformly. For [that Author] is the Beginning of things, from whom derive being itself and all things that in any way exist, as well as every beginning and every end.”²⁶ And after a few more [lines] he adds: “... and whatever other [properties] characterize any things [also derive from Him], inasmuch as what they are they are from being itself.”²⁷ The same Dionysius affirms of the same Beginning that it is finite and infinite, at rest and in motion—and that it is neither at rest nor in motion.²⁸ For he says we must concede that all the exemplars of things exist antecedently—in one supersubstantial union—in the Cause both of itself and of all things.”²⁹ See how clearly that divine man both there and in various other places affirms to be true the [statements] that I have set forth.

12 The following is now evident to you on the basis of the symbolism: how it is that you can understand that that First [Beginning] is the Measure of all things. For in an enfolding way [the Beginning] is all things that can be.³⁰ For [in our symbolism] the angle that is both

maximal and minimal is the actuality of every formable angle and is neither greater nor lesser but is prior to all quantity. For no man is of such little sense that he does not rightly see (1) that the most simple maximal and minimal angle enfolds within itself all formable [angles], whether they be large or small, and (2) that [the maximal and minimal angle] is neither larger nor smaller than any positable [angle] whatsoever.³¹ The name of one angle does not befit [the maximal and minimal angle], any more than does the name of all angles or of no angle. Hence, it cannot be called an acute angle or a right angle or an obtuse angle, for it is not any such angle but is the most simple cause of [angles]. Rightly, then, as Proclus mentions in his commentary on the *Parmenides*, Plato rejects all [predication] apropos of the [First] Beginning.³² Likewise, too, our Dionysius prefers negative theology to affirmative theology.³³

13 However, the name “One” seems to befit God better than does any other name. This is what Parmenides calls Him—and so too Anaxagoras, who said: “the One is better than all other things together.”³⁴ Do not construe [this name “One”] as pertaining to the numerical one, which is called the monad or the singular,³⁵ but [construe it] as pertaining to the One that is indivisible by any means of division—a One that is understood apart from any duality. Posterior to the One, no thing can either exist or be conceived apart from duality. Consequently, there is, first of all, the just-mentioned Absolute One and, next, a one with something additional—e.g., one *being*, one *substance*, and so on regarding all other things. Consequently, nothing can be said to be so simple, or can be conceived to be so simple, that it is not a one with something additional—except only for the Superexalted One. Hence, you see clearly that by means of the symbolism the following is befigured: viz., how it is that [God] is to be named by the names of all things and by none of all these names (as Hermes Mercurius said of Him)³⁶—and whatever other related points there are.

14 Take note of one more point: [viz.,] how it is that all creatable things are only a likeness. For [in our symbolism] every positable angle testifies of itself that it is not true angularity itself. For true angularity itself does not admit of more and less. For if it could be greater or smaller, it would not be true angularity itself. How would it be true angularity itself, since it would not be [all] that it could be? Therefore, every angle attests that it is not true angularity itself, because it can exist otherwise than it does. Instead, it attests that since

the angle which is both maximal and minimal cannot exist otherwise than it does, that angle is necessary—and most simple—true-angularity-itself. Therefore, every angle acknowledges that it is a likeness of true angularity, for [each angle] is *angle* not insofar as angle exists in itself but insofar as angle exists in something else, viz., in a surface. And so, true angularity is present in creatable and depictable angles as in a likeness of itself. Blessed Augustine rightly states that all creatures, upon being asked whether they are God, answer: “No, because we did not [create] ourselves, but rather God created us.”³⁷

15 From the foregoing you can now sufficiently see the following: how it is that now—when we look by way of a mirroring symbolism, as the Apostle says³⁸—we can have knowledge-of-God, which, assuredly, is no other than negative knowledge. By comparison, we know apropos of any described angle whatsoever that it is not the unqualifiedly maximal and minimal [angle]. Therefore, in every angle we see, negatively, the maximal [angle], which we know to exist and know not to be that described angle. Moreover, we know that the maximal and minimal [angle] is the complete totality and perfection of all formable angles and is both the innermost center and the containing circumference of them all. However, we cannot make a concept of the quiddity of the maximal and minimal angle. For neither the senses, the imagination, nor the intellect³⁹ can perceive, imagine, conceive, or understand anything which is such that it is like what is both maximal and minimal.

16 Hence, Plato says in his *Letters* that all things exist with the King of all and that they all exist for his sake and that he is the Cause of all good things.⁴⁰ And a few [lines] later [he says]: “The human mind desires to understand what kind of things those are. It views the kinds of things with which it is kindred, none of which are perfect; but in the King himself there is no such [characteristic].”⁴¹ Assuredly, Plato *there* wisely writes that this [teaching] is to be held secret. And not without reason does he call the First Beginning the King of all. For every state is instituted by, and ordered toward, a king; and by the king the state is governed, and through him it exists. Therefore, those things which are found to be distinct in the state, exist antecedently and unitedly in the king as the king himself and as life itself—just as Proclus adds.⁴² Dukes, counts, soldiers, judges, laws, measures, weights, and whatever such things—all are present in the king as in a public person in whom whatever can exist in the state exists actually as being the king himself. His law, written on parchment, is, in him, a living

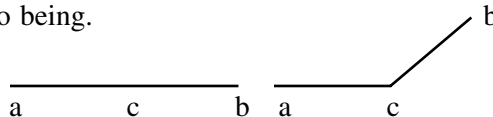
law—and similarly regarding all things of which he is the author. And from him all things have that which they have in the state—both their being and their [respective] name. Aristotle, in a similar respect, rightly named that king a prince to whom the whole army is ordained, as to an end, and from whom the army has whatever it is.⁴³ Indeed, just as the law written on dead parchment is, in the prince, a living law, so too in the First [Beginning] all things are life; and in the First [Beginning] time is eternity and creature is Creator.⁴⁴

17 Averroës said in Book XI of his *Metaphysics* that all Forms are in the First Mover actually; and in Book XII of his *Metaphysics* [he stated] that Aristotle, though denying Plato's [theory of] Ideas, posits Ideas and Forms in the First Mover.⁴⁵ Albert made the same assertion in his commentary on Dionysius.⁴⁶ For he states (1) that Aristotle speaks of the First Cause as tricausal, viz., as efficient Cause, formal Cause, and final Cause (the formal Cause is the Exemplar-Cause) and (2) that Aristotle does not find fault with Plato for *this* understanding [of Forms]. Now, it is true that God has in Himself the exemplars of all things.⁴⁷ But exemplars are forms. However, the theologians refer to exemplars, or Ideas, as the will of God, because the Prophet says that God created as He willed to.⁴⁸ Now, the will which in the First Intellect is Form itself is rightly said to be the Exemplar, just as in a prince the will as supported by reason is the exemplar of the law, for what has pleased the prince has the force of law.⁴⁹

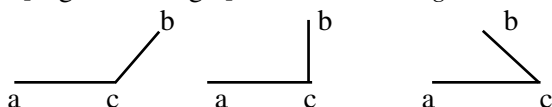
18 All those statements which Plato or Aristotle or someone else makes are not other than the beryl and the symbolism show to you: viz., that the True Being [*veritas*]—by means of a likeness to itself—bestows being on all things. Likewise, Albert [holds this view], where in the previously mentioned passage he states: “We must in some way acknowledge that from the First, one Form flows into all things. This Form is the likeness of the essence of the First, and through it all things partake of being that is derived from the First.”⁵⁰ Note also that True Being (*veritas*), which is [all] that which can be, cannot be partaken of.⁵¹ Rather, it is impartible by means of its likeness,⁵² which can be received in greater or lesser degree in accordance with the disposition of the receiver.⁵³ Avicenna in his book *The Fount of Life* says that various reflexive turnings of being cause differences among beings, since one reflexive turning adds life to being, and two reflexive turnings add intellect.⁵⁴ How this [point] may be grasped in a symbolism, you may envision in the way that follows.

19 Let it be, then, that *a b* is a line representing the likeness of True

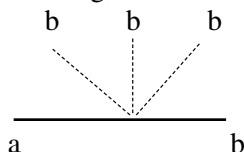
Being [*veritas*]*—*a likeness that falls in-between True Being and nothing. And let *b* be the termination of the likeness at nothing. Moreover, let *b* be folded at point *c* with an enfolding movement toward *a*, [thereby] befiguring the movement by which God calls forth [creatures] from not-being to being.



In that case, line *a b* (as also line *a c*) is fixed, insofar as it proceeds from its origin; and line *a b* is movable, insofar as it is moved at *c* in an enfolding direction toward its origin. By means of this movement, *c b* produces, together with *c a*, various angles; and through the movement, *c b* unfolds differences of likeness. First of all, [the movement of *c b*] produces, with less formal likeness, an obtuse angle of *being*; then [it produces], with more formal [likeness, an angle] of *living*; and then [it produces], with greatest formal [likeness]*—*and in an acute [angle—an angle] of *understanding*.



An acute angle partakes more of angle's actuality and simplicity; and it is more like its first beginning. Moreover, an acute angle is present in the other angles—viz., in the angle of living and in the angle of being. Similarly, the angle of living is present in the angle of being. Moreover, the intermediate differences between being and life and understanding and what[ever] can be unfolded [from the movement of *c b*] you will see in the symbolism by the following means. [The line] *a b*, which illustrates True Being, contains within itself whatever [angles] can be unfolded.



And the unfolding occurs by means of movement. Now, just how there occurs the movement in which the simple element unfolds from itself that which is composed of elements is befigured in the symbolism, just as I have set forth. For elemental simplicity comes from the movable and the immovable, even as a natural beginning is a beginning from movement and rest.

- 20 Hence, when, in a similar way, the Creator-Intellect moves *c b*, He unfolds exemplars (which He has within Himself)⁵⁵ in a likeness of Himself—just as when a mathematician folds a line into a triangle, he unfolds by means of a movement-of-enfolding the triangle that he has within himself, viz., within his mind. Hence, you know that line *a b* is to be envisioned as communicable true being, which is a likeness of incommunicable True Being, through which all true beings are true beings. [That communicable true being] is not absolute, as is [incommunicable] True Being, but is present in true beings. Now, we experience the being of true beings with respect to a three-fold gradation. For (1) some [of them] merely *exist*, whereas (2) others [of them] bear a more simple likeness to True Being, and their being is mightier because by virtue of the fact that they exist, they are *alive*; (3) still other [beings bear a still] more simple [likeness to True Being], for because of the fact that they exist, they are alive and have *intellect*. Now, the more simple the being, the more mighty and powerful. And so, Absolute Simplicity, or Absolute True Being, is omnipotent.
- 21 [Let us continue onward both] by means of one more symbolism and by means of the doctrine that we may look unto things minimal in the course of our seeking things maximal. The one, or the monad, is simpler than the point. Therefore, the indivisibility of a point is a likeness of the indivisibility of the one. So let it be the case that the one is as indivisible and incommunicable True Being (*veritas*), which wills to manifest itself and communicate itself by means of a likeness of itself. Now, the one depicts itself or befigures itself, and [therefrom] arises the point. However, the one is not a point, which is an indivisibility communicable in a continuum.
- 22 Therefore, let the point be communicated in the way in which it is communicable and there results a material object. Now, a point is indivisible by any of the modes-of-being that belong to a continuum and to a dimension. The modes-of-being of a continuum are a line, a surface, and a material object; but the modes-of-being of dimension
- 23 are length, width, and depth. Therefore, a line partakes of the indivisibility of a point, because a line is indivisible qua line; for a line cannot be divided into a non-line; nor is it divisible with respect to width and depth. A surface partakes of the indivisibility of a point because it is not divisible into a non-surface. Moreover, a material object would be indivisible with respect to depth, because it cannot be divided into a non-material-object. In the indivisibility of a point are

enfolded all the foregoing indivisibilities. Therefore, in those indivisibilities there is found nothing except the unfolding of the indivisibility of a point. Therefore, all that is present in a material object is only a point, i.e., is only the likeness of the one. Moreover, a point does not exist as free from a material object or from a surface or from a line, because the point is the intrinsic beginning and confers indivisibility. However, a line partakes of the simplicity of a point more than does a surface; and a surface [partakes thereof more] than does a material object—as was evident. From this consideration of a point and a material object elevate yourself unto a likeness of True Being and of the universe; and by means of [this] quite clear symbolism [of a point] make a conjecture about what has been said.

24 Receive a more accurate conceptualism from [a consideration of] man, who measures all things.⁵⁶ In man intellect is the pinnacle of reason.⁵⁷ Intellect's being is separated from the body, and in and of itself intellect is something real. Next there comes soul, and then nature; lastly, there comes body. I call *soul* that which enlivens and confers enlivening being. Intellect, which, on account of its simple universality and its indivisibility can neither be communicated nor be partaken of, renders itself communicable in and through its likeness, viz., in and through the soul.⁵⁸ For the soul's perceptual cognition shows that the soul is a likeness of the intellect. Through the soul the intellect communicates itself to the nature—and through the nature, to the body. By virtue of the fact that the soul is a likeness of the intellect, it perceives in and of itself; by virtue of the fact that it is united to the nature, it enlivens. And so, the soul enlivens by means of the nature, and it perceives in and of itself. Therefore, what[ever] the soul works in the body by means of the nature, it works contractedly—even as the soul's cognitive [power works] in the sense-organs contractedly and in accordance with [the respective function of] the organs.

25 Therefore, let us look at the body and at all its members, considered with respect to their form, and at each member's law (or nature), power, operation, and order—so that there is one man.⁵⁹ And whatever we find in an unfolded way [in these members considered with respect to their form], these things we also find [in an enfolded way] in the intellect as in the cause, author, and king in whom all these things are present as in their efficient, formal, and final cause. For they all are present antecedently in their *effecting* power, just as in the power of an emperor are present the excellences and offices of the state. All [the bodily members] are *formally* present in the intellect,

which is the form of them all, so that they are formed to the extent that they are in conformity with the intellect's concept. They all are present *in a final way*⁶⁰ in the intellect since they exist for the intellect's sake, since the intellect is the goal and object-of-desire of them all. For all the [body's] members seek nothing except inseparable union with the intellect, as with their beginning, ultimate good, and everlasting life.

26 Who will adequately explain how the soul, which is a likeness of the intellect, enfolds within itself all enlivenable members and communicates life to them all by means of the nature? And who will explain how, as an instrument, the nature enfolds all these members and contains antecedently within itself the entire movement of, and the nature of, all the members? The intellect by means of a likeness of itself—a likeness, which, in man, is the sensitive soul—directs the nature and all natural movement, so that all [members] are conformed to its word, concept, or will. Similarly, in the universe, over which the Creator-Intellect presides, nothing at all is found except a likeness, or a concept, of the Creator. By way of [further] comparison: If the Creator-Intellect were sight that willed to manifest its power-of-seeing, it would conceive of everything visible, in which it would manifest itself—would conceive of it in that it would have within itself everything visible and would form all visible things in conformity with each visible thing present in its concept.⁶¹ For in all visible things there would be found nothing except a conformity with—and, thus, a likeness of—their Creator-Intellect.

27 Both the saints and the philosophers posit very different symbolisms. Plato in his book *The Republic* takes the sun [as a symbolic illustration]⁶² and takes note of its power in perceptible objects. And from the likeness of the sun he elevates himself to the light-of-intelligence of the Creator-Intellect. The Great Dionysius imitates Plato.⁶³ For, assuredly, that symbolism is pleasing, because of the similarity between perceptible light and intelligible light. Albert takes the symbolism of rectitude⁶⁴—as if linear rectitude (which, as it is, cannot be partaken of by anything and which remains absolute and incapable of being partaken of) gave being to every piece of wood. Yet, in contracted being, i.e., in a likeness of itself, it is partaken-of in various ways by each piece of wood, since the one piece [partakes] in a nodal way, another piece in a crooked way, and so on with respect to infinite differences. Moreover, Albert envisions absolute hotness and how all hot objects partake of its likeness and have from it their being; in

a similar way he makes a concept of the Creator-Intellect and of creatures.⁶⁵ Countless [symbolic] routes can be conceived. I have posited many elsewhere—in *Learned Ignorance* and other books. But none [of them] can arrive at precision, since the divine mode is above every other mode. Now, if you apply eyeglasses and see (through the maximal and minimal mode) the beginning of every mode (in which all modes are enfolded and which no other modes can unfold), then you will be able to make a truer speculation regarding the divine mode.

28 Perhaps you might say that the use of the beryl presupposes that an essence admits of greater and lesser degrees [and that], otherwise, its beginning could not be seen through what is both maximal and minimal. I reply that although with respect to itself the essence is not seen to admit of greater and lesser, nevertheless in relation to both the being and the proper acts of its outward form it partakes of more and less in accordance with the disposition of the receiving material. [It does so] to such an extent that, as Avicenna says, God is seen in certain things—[e.g.,] in men who have [the gift of] a divine intellect and [of divine] operations.⁶⁶ Moreover, this method-of-the-beryl was not altogether hidden from Aristotle, who, in finding a first thing, reasoned by the following argument: Wherever we find the participation of one thing by other things according to more and less, we must also come to a first thing, in which the first itself is present. For example, from heat, which is partaken of by different objects, we come to fire, in which the first is present as in a fount from which all other [hot] objects receive heat.⁶⁷

29 Likewise, Albert, making use of the foregoing rule, seeks the First, in which is present the Rational Fount of the being of all things that partake of being. So too, [he seeks] the beginning of knowing, where he says the following:⁶⁸ ‘Since intelligence, the rational soul, and the sensitive⁶⁹ soul share in the power of knowing,⁷⁰ they must receive this [cognitive] nature from someone in whom it is present, at first, as in a Fount; and this Fount is God. But it is impossible that they [all] receive [the cognitive nature] equally from God, because in that case they would be equally near the Beginning and would be of equal power in knowing. Hence, [the nature] is received first of all in the intelligence, which has intelligent being to the extent that it partakes of the divine ray. Likewise, the rational soul partakes of the cognitive power to the extent that it partakes of the ray of the intelligence, although the intelligence is [only] dimly present in the rational soul. So too, the sensitive soul partakes of cognition to the extent that the ray

of the rational soul is impressed on the sensitive soul, although the rational soul is [only] dimly present in the sensitive soul. But the sensitive soul comes last. It does not channel the cognitive power further.’ Rather, as Albert says, ‘the rational soul does not flow into the senses unless the senses are conjoined to it; so too, the First does not flow into the second unless the second is conjoined to it. Do not understand [these latter statements to mean] that the intelligence creates souls or that the soul [creates] the senses; but, rather, [take them to mean] that in the first of these things [viz., in the intelligence] the [divine] ray that is received from Eternal Wisdom is the exemplar—and, as it were, the seminal origin—of the second. And because that [divine] ray is always received as diminished in power, the soul does not receive the ray in accordance with *intelligible* being, nor does the vegetable soul receive a *cognitive* ray from the sensitive soul.’

30 This same great Albert, in the previously cited commentary, likens that divine ray (which illumines the cognitive nature) to the ray of the sun.⁷¹ The sun’s ray, considered in itself before it enters the air, is universal and simple; and it is received by the air, when it penetrates the air deeply and illumines it thoroughly. Thereafter, it is received on a surface by material objects, which are end-points. There it causes different colors, in accordance with the different dispositions-[to-receive-it. It causes] a bright white color if the surface is bright; [it causes] black if [the surface is] dark; and [it causes] in-between colors in accordance with the in-between dispositions [of the receiving material]. In a similar way, the First Beginning (viz., the Wisdom of God, or the Divine Knowledge, which is the abiding and incommunicable Essence of God) is related to its own ray (which is a cognitive form), for the First Beginning illumines certain natures, so that they may know the simple quiddities of things. And this knowledge is in accordance with the maximum brightness that can be received by creatures; and this reception [of the maximum receivable brightness] occurs in intelligences.⁷² The brightness is received by other things, in which it does not effect such a knowledge of simple quiddities but [effects only a knowledge] of [quiddities] mixed with succession and time, as is the case [with knowledge] on the part of human beings. For in human beings knowledge begins from the senses;⁷³ and so, [human] knowledge must arrive at what is a simple-intelligible by comparing one thing with another.⁷⁴

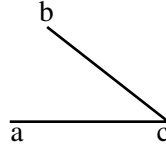
31 Accordingly, Isaac said that reason arises in the shadow of intelligence and that the senses arise in the shadow-of-reason, at which

point knowledge ceases.⁷⁵ Hence, the vegetable soul arises in the shadow of the senses and does not partake of the cognitive ray in order to be able to receive the perceptual form and to abstract it from the appendages of matter, so that the perceptual form becomes a simple cognizable. But Avicenna makes a symbolism of fire and of its different modes-of-being, from aether downwards until fire is altogether obscured in stones.⁷⁶

32 All of the foregoing writers, along with all the others I have seen, have lacked the beryl. And so, I think that if with abiding perseverance they had followed the great Dionysius, they would have seen quite plainly the Beginning of all things, and they would have written commentaries on Dionysius, in accordance with the intention of that writer himself. Instead, when they come to [the doctrine of] the conjunction-of-opposites, they interpret the text of the divine teacher disjunctively. Now, it is important to be able to attach oneself firmly to [the doctrine of] the conjunction-of-opposites. Although we know that we ought to do such, nevertheless when we revert to reason's inferences, we often slip and endeavor to furnish rational support for a most certain insight, which is beyond all rational support.⁷⁷ And so, at that moment, we fall from divine matters to human matters, and we adduce weak and ineffective reasons. Plato, in his *Letters*, where he set forth [his thoughts] about the vision of the First Cause, teaches that this [falling away] happens to all men.⁷⁸ Therefore, if you wish to see Eternal Wisdom, i.e., the Cognitive Beginning, then with [your intellectual eyeglasses of] beryl affixed, look at [the Beginning] through what is maximally and minimally cognizable. And by means of a symbolism (for example, of angles) search out (1) acute, formal, simple, and penetrative cognitive natures (comparable to acute angles) and (2) other more obtuse natures and, lastly, (3) the most obtuse natures (comparable to obtuse angles). And you will be able to pursue all possible gradations [of cognitive natures]; and just as I have stated to be the case regarding the present matter, such will also be the case regarding all other similar matters.

33 Perhaps you doubt that the Beginning is seen to be triune. I reply: Every beginning is indivisible by means of any division that characterizes its effects, i.e., that characterizes things originated from it. Therefore, the First Beginning is most simple and most perfect Indivisibility. Now, in the essence of most perfect Indivisibility I see Oneness, which is the fount of Indivisibility; I see Equality, which is indivisibility of Oneness; and I see Union, which is indivisibility of

Oneness and Equality.⁷⁹ And I make use of a symbolism, and I envision the angle $a c b$; and I consider point c to be the first beginning of the angle and consider lines $c a$ and $c b$ to be a second beginning.



Point c is a triune beginning, for it is the beginning of line $c a$, which is an immovable line, and of line $c b$, which is a differential-forming line.⁸⁰ And I see that point c is the union of both lines and that point c is more closely and nearly the beginning of the angle, i.e., is [more nearly] both the beginning and the end of the angle; for the angle begins at point c and ends at the same point.

34 Therefore, when I look at the triune beginning in c , I see it to be the fount from which, first of all, *oneness*, or necessity, emanates—uniting and binding together all things. Next, I see it to be the beginning from which *equality* emanates, forming, or equalizing, all things no matter how different they are—[forming them] by whatever movement this forming has to be accomplished. Likewise, I see c to be the beginning from which emanates the *union*, and the conservation, of all bound-together and formed things. [By comparison], then, I see that the most simple Beginning is triune, so that its indivisibility is most perfect and so that it is the Cause of all things; these things cannot be present in its indivisible Essence, or trine Indivisibility.⁸¹

35 Philosophers, by ascending from caused to Cause, have touched upon this Trinity, which they saw to be present in the Beginning. Anaxagoras (and before him Emortinus Clasomenus, as Aristotle claims)⁸² was the first one who saw the intellectual beginning. Plato praised him,⁸³ reading his books very often, because it seemed to Plato that [in him] he had found a teacher. And the things that Plato says about him are also said by Aristotle.⁸⁴ For Anaxagoras himself opened both Plato's and Aristotle's eyes. But both endeavored to find this beginning through reasoning. And Plato named the Beginning, by whom all things were created, the Creator-Intellect; and the Creator-Intellect's Father [he called] God and the Cause of all things.⁸⁵ And he said, first of all, that all things are present in the First⁸⁶ in such a way that they are present in a threefold Cause: viz., an efficient-formal-final Cause.⁸⁷ Secondly, he said that all things are present in the Creator-Intellect, which he calls the first creature of God; and he

maintains that the Creator-Intellect's begottenness by the First is as [that of] a son by a father. This Intellect (which Sacred Scripture names "Wisdom created from the Beginning and created prior to all ages"⁸⁸ and "the Firstborn of all creation"⁸⁹) Plato calls Creator, as being the Mediator between the [First] Cause and the caused perceptible objects. This Intellect executes the command, or intention, of the Father. Thirdly, Plato saw that a Spirit, or a Motion, was diffused throughout the universe, uniting and conserving all the things that are in the world.⁹⁰

36 Therefore, first of all, Plato saw all things as present in God by means of a primary and most simple mode-of-being, just as all things are present in the efficacious and omnipotent [divine] power. Secondly, he saw all things to be present as in the most wise Executor of [God's] command; and this mode-of-being he calls the second mode. Thirdly, he saw all things to be present as in the Instrument of the Executor, i.e., to be present in motion; for through motion things-which-come-to-be are actually effected. Now, this third mode-of-being Aristotle called the world-soul, although he did not use these [exact] words. He seems to say the same thing [as Plato] with respect to God: viz., that all things are present in God as in a triune Cause and that all Forms are present in the Intelligence that moves the heavens, as well as in the motion enlivened by the noble [world-]soul. However, he multiplies the intelligences that are full of Forms, doing so in accordance with the multitude of the heavenly orbits; for he calls these intelligences movers of the orbits. Nevertheless, according to his own procedure he shows that we must come to a First Mover of all moving intelligences.⁹¹ And this Mover he calls the Prince, or the First Intellect.⁹²

37 But Plato, when considering the multitude of intelligences, viewed that Intellect by participation in which all intelligences are intelligences. And because, first of all, he saw that God is the absolute, most simple, non-participatable, and incommunicable Beginning, he thought that that communicable Intellect—which in various ways is partaken of by, and imparted to, many gods and intelligences—is the first creature. Likewise, he also thought that the world-soul, which is partaken of in an imparted way by all souls, exists prior to all other souls and exists as being that in which all souls are enfolded antecedently as in their own beginning. I recall that in *Learned Ignorance* I said certain things about these three modes of existing antecedently and about how they receive the names of the fates.⁹³

But note that it is not necessarily the case that there is a universal created-intellect or a universal world-soul simply because of [the fact of] participation—[a consideration] which influenced Plato. The triune First Beginning is amply sufficient for every mode-of-being, even though the First Beginning is absolute and superexalted. For it is not a contracted beginning, as is nature, which works of necessity, but is the Beginning of nature and so is supernatural and free and is that which voluntarily creates all things.⁹⁴ Now, things-that-are-made-voluntarily exist insofar as they are conformed to the [creating] will, and so their form is the intention of their commander. Now, an intention is a likeness of the intender—a likeness which is communicable to, and receivable by, another. Therefore, every creature is an intention of the Omnipotent Will.

38 Neither Plato nor Aristotle knew the foregoing fact. For, clearly, both of them believed that the Creator-Intellect made all things because of a necessity of its nature. From this [belief] their every error followed. For although [the Creator] does not work by way of an accident, as fire [works] by way of heat, as Avicenna rightly states⁹⁵ (for no accident can be present in the Creator's simplicity; and, hence, the Creator is seen to act by way of His essence), nevertheless He does not therefore act as does nature or as does an instrument necessitated by the command of a superior; rather, [He acts] by way of free will,⁹⁶ which is also His essence. Aristotle, in his *Metaphysics*, rightly saw how it is that in the First Beginning all things are the First Beginning;⁹⁷ but he did not notice that the First Beginning's will is not *other* than His reason and His essence.

39 But Eusebius Pamphili, in his book *Preparation for the Gospel*,⁹⁸ drew together [statements regarding] Plato's holding a conception of the triune Beginning and [regarding] that conception's very closely approaching unto our Christian theology. [Eusebius drew these statements] from the books of Numenius (who wrote down Plato's secret [teachings]) and of Plotinus and of others. Aristotle, too, in his metaphysics, which he calls theology, shows by appeal to reason many points that conform to the truth: in particular, that the Beginning is Intellect which is altogether actual—Intellect which understands itself and from whose [understanding of itself] there comes supreme Delight.⁹⁹ Indeed, even our theologians say this: viz., that the Divine Intellect, by virtue of understanding itself, begets from itself—from its essence and its nature—a most equal intelligible likeness of itself. For the Intellect begets the Word, in which it is present substantially; and

from this [begetting] there proceeds Delight, in which is present the consubstantiality of Begetter and Begotten. However, if you wish to have all possible knowledge of this Beginning, consider, in the case of every originated thing, *from what it is*, *what it is*, and the *union* [of these two]. And through the beryl of what is both a maximal and a minimal originated thing, look at the Beginning of all originated things. In this Beginning you will find to be present most perfectly, in a divine manner, a Trinity that is the most simple Beginning of every triune creature. And note that in the simple conception of what is originated I express a trinity of unitary essence—doing so by means of “from what it is,” “what it is,” and “union”.¹⁰⁰ In the case of perceptible substances these [three] are commonly called form, matter, and composite;¹⁰¹ e.g., in the case of a man [we speak of] the soul, the body, and the union of the two.

40 In harmonizing all the other philosophers, Aristotle said that the beginnings which are present in a substance are contraries. And he named three beginnings: matter, form, and privation.¹⁰² Although more than all the other [philosophers] Aristotle is held to be the most careful and most acute reasoner, I think that he and all the others utterly failed in regard to one point. For since the beginnings are contraries, [those philosophers] failed to arrive at [a correct understanding of] that third, assuredly necessary, beginning [viz., privation]. This [failure occurred] because they did not believe it to be possible that contraries coincide in that [third] beginning, since contraries expel one another. Hence, from [a consideration of that] first principle which denies that contradictories can both be true at the same time, the Philosopher¹⁰³ showed that, likewise, contraries cannot be present together.

41 Our beryl makes us see more acutely, so that, in the Uniting Beginning, we see opposites prior to duality, i.e., before they are two contradictories. [The situation is] as if we were to see the smallest of contraries coincide (e.g., minimal heat and minimal cold; minimal slowness and minimal fastness; etc.), so that they are one beginning prior to the duality of both contraries—even as in my short work *On Mathematical Perfection* I stated of a minimal arc and a minimal cord that they coincide.¹⁰⁴ Hence, just as an angle that is minimally acute and minimally obtuse is a simple right angle, in which the smallest of contrary angles coincide, before acute angle and obtuse angle are two angles, so too is the situation regarding the Uniting Beginning, in which the smallest of contraries altogether coincide.

42 But if Aristotle had understood the beginning which he calls *privation*—understood it in such a way that privation is a beginning that posits a coincidence of contraries and that, therefore, (being “deprived,” as it were, of every contrariety), precedes duality, which is necessary in the case of contraries—then he would have seen correctly. But out of fear of admitting that contraries are present at the same time in the same thing, he shunned the truth regarding this beginning. And because he saw that a third beginning is necessary, and saw that it had to be privation, he made privation a beginning exclusive of [all] positing. Subsequently—not being able fully to avoid doing so—he is seen to posit in matter a certain inchoateness of forms. This inchoateness, if it is keenly viewed, is, in fact, the union of which I am speaking. Yet, he does not understand the inchoateness to be union, nor does he name it such. And for this reason all [those] philosophers failed to arrive at the Spirit, who is the Beginning-of-union and who is the third person in God, according to our perfect theology. Nonetheless, very many [of those philosophers] spoke eloquently of the Father and of the Son. Especially, the Platonists [did so]. St. Augustine says¹⁰⁵ that he discovered in their books the Gospel of John-our-theologian—from “In the beginning was the Word” down to the name of John the Baptist and [the mention of] the Incarnation.¹⁰⁶ In that [initial portion of the] Gospel no mention is made of the Holy Spirit.

43 You need especially to take note of the things I said about this third beginning. Aristotle states, and rightly so, that the beginnings are minimal and indivisible with respect to quantitative magnitude but are maximal with respect to magnitude-of-power. Hence, neither form nor matter is divisible (for neither is either qualitative or quantitative); nor is their union divisible. Therefore, the essence, which is present in them [i.e., in the form and the matter and their union], is indivisible. And because our intellect cannot conceive of what is [altogether] simple (for the intellect makes a concept by way of the imagination, which takes from perceptual [images] the beginning, or subject, of its own image or figure), it cannot conceive of the [respective] essence of things.¹⁰⁷ Nevertheless, the intellect sees that the indivisible essence exists trinely above the imagination and above its own concept.¹⁰⁸

44 And so, when the intellect pays very careful attention, it sees corporeal substance as indivisible substance—yet, as divisible accidentally. Accordingly, when a material object is divided, the substance is not divided, because the material object is not divided into something that is not a material object. Nor is it divided into substantial parts—

viz., form, matter, and union. (These latter are more properly called beginnings than parts.) For that would be to divide the indivisible by the indivisible (as a point would be divided by a point)—something which is not possible. But a continuum is divided into continua; for its subject, viz., quantity, can admit of being greater and lesser. Now, the capability to be divided comes from indivisible matter. It is not the case that matter is indivisible because of its oneness (as is form) or because of its smallness (as is union); rather, matter is indivisible because of its formlessness (as is a not-yet-existent being). Accordingly, since matter has being through a form that is deeply immersed in it and that becomes very material, then because of the matter the quantity is divided. Hence, by means of [this] symbolism you will be able to investigate the differences of such forms—which ones are very material and very immersed [in matter] and which ones are less so and which ones are very simple. And since all corruption, all mutability, and all division are from matter, you will see immediately the causes of the generations and the corruptions—and will see whatever other such things.

- 45 When Aristotle planned to write his *Politics*, he turned to the minimum in economy and governance. And by means of that minimum he saw the way in which the maximum could be supposed to exist. And he said that in other matters we ought to proceed in a similar manner.¹⁰⁹ But in his *Metaphysics* he says that a curve and a straight line are opposed by nature, so that the one cannot be transformed into the other.¹¹⁰ In the first instance, he spoke correctly, and I think that if anyone seeks to know any maxima whatsoever, and if he turns to the [respective] minimum of the opposites, then surely he will discover secret matters that are knowable. In the second instance, his consideration about the curve and the straight line was not correct, for they are opposed, but there is a single minimum of both.¹¹¹ Perhaps he made these latter statements so as to excuse his ignorance of the squaring of the circle¹¹²—a topic he often mentions. You know from earlier on¹¹³ that the Beginning is indivisible by any mode by which division is present in originated things. Therefore, originated things that are divided into contraries have a beginning that is indivisible in that way. And so, contraries belong to the same genus. By means of the beryl and by means of the symbolism, you will acquire knowledge about the beginning of opposites and about their difference and about all that is attainable concerning the beginning and the difference. A similar situation holds generally true regarding knowledge that

comes by way of the beginning-of-knowable-things and by means of their differences, just as you heard in a similar respect earlier;¹¹⁴ for in all the instances there is one method of proceeding.

- 46 Thus, if perchance you wish to amplify and extend, at will, [what was said by] the great Dionysius, who assigned to God many names, then with the beryl and the symbolism proceed to the beginning of any [divine] name at all. And with God ever guiding you, you will discern all that can be humanly said. Moreover, you will more subtly attain unto the causes in nature—in particular, unto why the generation of the one thing is the corruption of the other. For in seeing one contrary through the beryl, you will see that in it the beginning of the other contrary is present. [You will discern this fact], for example, when by way of maximal and minimal hotness you see that the beginning of hotness is only indivisibility-by-any-mode-of-dividing-heat and is [a beginning that is] separated from all heat. For the beginning is none of the things originated [from it]. Now, hot things are originated from the beginning of heat. Therefore, the beginning of heat is not hot. Now, in the cold I see that which belongs to the same genus [as does the hot] but which is not the hot. The situation is similar regarding other contraries. Therefore, since in the one contrary the beginning of the other contrary is present, their transformations are circular, and there is a common subject for each contrary.
- 47 Thus, you see how it is that receptivity is transformed into actuality. For example, a student receives information in order to become a teacher, or an instructor; and after being heated, an object (*subiectum*) is changed into heat-giving fire; and the senses receive an impression of the object's form [*species obiecti*] in order to be made actually perceiving; and matter [receives] the impression of form in order to become actual. But when I speak of contraries, you must take note of the fact that I am referring to those contraries which are of the same genus and are divisible equally. For in *that* case there is present in the one contrary the beginning of the other.
- 48 Assuredly, it seems to me that hereafter you will ask what I consider being to be; i.e., you will ask what *substance* is. I wish to give you a satisfactory answer, as best I can, although my earlier remarks contain what I am now about to say. Aristotle writes that this is an ancient question.¹¹⁵ All seekers-of-truth have always sought—and still seek, as he says—a solution to this puzzle. But he concluded that all knowledge depends on a resolution of this puzzle. For to know essential being¹¹⁶—i.e., to know that a thing is *this*, e.g., a house, be-

cause this is the essential being for a house—is to have attained unto the highest thing knowable. But when Aristotle pursued this topic carefully, he explored all-up-and-down and found that not even matter becomes substantial, since matter is possibility-of-being. If possibility-of-being derived from something other than itself, then that from which [it derived] would have been possibility-of-being, since nothing comes into being except what is possible to come into being. Consequently, it is not the case that possibility derives from possibility. Therefore, it is not the case that matter derives from something other than itself; nor does it derive from nothing, since from nothing nothing comes. Thereafter, Aristotle shows that *form* is not derived; for form would have to be derived from being that is in a state of potency, and, hence, [it would have to be derived] from matter. As an example he points to how it is that (1) one who makes a piece of bronze to be round does not create a bronze sphere but (2) what was always a sphere is induced [by him] into the bronze material. Therefore, only the composite is made.¹¹⁷ Therefore, the form-that-actually-forms, in the case of a composite, Aristotle calls the essential being (*quod erat esse*); and when he views the form as separated [from the material], he calls it specific form [*species*].

- 49 But Aristotle is uncertain as to what that substance is which he calls essence. For he does not know from whence it comes or where it exists. And [he does not know] (1) whether it is oneness (*ipsum unum*) or being or genus or (2) whether it derives from an Idea, which is a substance existing in and of itself, or (3) whether it is educed from the potency of matter and, if so, how this educing comes about.¹¹⁸ For, of necessity, every being-which-is-in-potency is made actual by means of a being that is actual. For unless actuality were prior to potency, how would potency become actualized? For if potency made itself actual, potency would exist actually before it existed actually. And if potency were antecedently actual, it would be a specific form—or an Idea—that existed separately [from matter]. But neither of these alternatives seems true. For one and the same thing would have to exist separately and not exist separately, since the specific form that existed separately could not be said to be *one* thing, and the substance—the essential being—be said to be *another* thing. For if the substance is *other*, then it is not the essential being; and if the specific forms exist separately from perceptible objects, they must exist either as do numbers or as do separately existing magnitudes or as do mathematical forms. But since numbers, magnitudes, and mathematical forms

depend on matter and on a subject—in whose absence mathematical do not have being—they do not exist as separated [from matter or from a subject]. But if specific forms do not exist as separated, they are not universals, nor can knowledge of them be obtained.

50 Aristotle reasoned most subtly by means of many such considerations. And, as it seems, he was not able to make up his mind completely, because of his uncertainty about Ideas and specific forms. (As Proclus tells us, even Socrates, both as a youth and as an old man, had doubts about this issue.)¹¹⁹ Nevertheless, Aristotle preferred the view that although some substances exist separately from matter,¹²⁰ specific forms are not substances that exist separately—even as a specific form (e.g., a house) from an art, or a craft, does not have substantial being that exists separately from matter. But though Aristotle quite often raised this issue, he always concluded that it was a most difficult one.

51 However, I note that even if Aristotle had discerned about specific form or had found out the truth concerning those topics, nevertheless it is not the case that he would therefore have been able to attain unto essential being—except in the way in which someone attains unto the fact that *this* [given] measure is the sextarius because it is the essential being for the sextarius (e.g., because it is such as was established by the prince of the state to be the sextarius).¹²¹ But why it was established to be such as it is and not otherwise, he would not thereby know—except that in the end he would say without hesitation: “What has pleased the Prince has the force of law.”¹²² And so, I say with [that] wise man: There is no reason for all the works of God (i.e., there is no reason why the heavens are heavens, why the earth is earth, why man is man)—there is no reason except that He who made [them] decreed it to be thus. To explore the issue further is foolish—as in a similar respect Aristotle says that to wish to seek a demonstration of the first principle “Each thing either is or is not [the case]” is foolish.¹²³ But when one considers carefully (1) that every creature has its reason-for-being¹²⁴ only from the fact that it was created to be thus, and (2) that the will of the Creator is the ultimate reason-for-being, and (3) that God the Creator is simple Intellect which creates through itself, so that His will is only His intellect, or reason (indeed, is the Fount of rational grounds): then he sees clearly that what was created by the [divine] will sprang forth from the Fount of reason—just as an imperial law is only the emperor’s reason, which appears to us as his will.

52 In order that we may approach more closely [unto these truths], we still must consider [the following facts]: (1) that our intellect does not know how completely to free its concepts from imagination (with which intellect is associated); (2) that, hence, in the case of those intellectual concepts that are mathematical, intellect posits that the figures which it imagines are as substantial forms; and (3) that the intellect focuses its considerations on those figures and on intellectual numbers because, being of intelligible matter, they are simpler than are perceptible objects. And since our intellect derives all [its contents] through the senses,¹²⁵ it supposes that—by means of those incorruptible and quite subtle figures, freed from perceptual qualities—it can apprehend, at least in terms of a likeness, everything attainable. Therefore, one [philosopher] asserts that the substantial element is as the one and that substances are as numbers; another [asserts] that [the substantial element is] as a point—and similarly [as regards the statements] which follow therefrom.

53 Hence, in the foregoing way and in accordance with the aforementioned¹²⁶ intellectual conceptions, we see that indivisibility is the beginning that is prior to all other things. For the reason that the one, the point, and every other beginning is a beginning is that they are indivisible. And in accordance with our intellectual concept: what is indivisible is a more formal, and a more precise, beginning. Nevertheless, the indivisible cannot be attained except negatively. Yet, it is attained in all divisible things, as became evident earlier on.¹²⁷ For, as is obvious: if indivisibility is removed, then no substance remains; and, hence, every existing thing has as much being and substance as it has indivisibility. But, as Aristotle rightly says, this negative knowledge of beginning is obscure.¹²⁸ For to know that substance is not quantity, quality, or any other accident is not clear knowledge—as would be that knowledge which would manifest substance positively.¹²⁹ But here below we know with the eye of our mind and in a symbolism and through a mirroring that the unnameable Indivisibility is not apprehensible by any name nameable by us or by any concept formable by us. When we see most truly this Indivisibility beyond [all positive knowledge], we are not disturbed by the fact that our Beginning transcends all clarity and all accessible light, even as he who finds an uncountable and inexhaustible treasure—the treasure of his life—rejoices more than [does he who finds a treasure that is] countable and exhaustible.¹³⁰

54 After the foregoing [observations] let us call to mind what I said

earlier on¹³¹ about intention: viz., that the creature is the *intention* of the Creator. And let us consider this intention to be the creature's truest quiddity. By way of illustration: if when someone speaks to us we attain unto the quiddity of his words, we attain only unto the intention of the speaker. Similarly, when through the senses we take in perceptual forms, we simplify them as best we can, in order to see with our intellect a thing's quiddity. Now, to simplify a [perceptual] form is to remove¹³² its corruptible accidents—which cannot be the quiddity—in order to arrive at the intention of the Creator-Intellect by making inferences on the basis of more subtle images, just as we would on the basis of oral words or of written characters. We know that the object's quiddity—which is contained in those signs of, and forms of, the perceptible object (contained as in letters or oral words)—is the Intellect's intention. Thus, the perceptible object is as the Creator's word, in which His intention is contained; when we apprehend this intention, we know the quiddity, and we are satisfied. Now, the manifestation occurs for the sake of the intention; for the Speaker, or Creator-Intellect, intends to manifest Himself in that way. Therefore, when we apprehend the intention, which is the quiddity of the word, we know the essential being. For the essential being that is present in the intellect is apprehended in and through the intention—just as in a completed house we apprehend the architect's intention, which was present in his intellect.

55 Know, too, that I have found, as it seems to me, a certain additional failing on the part of [those] seekers of truth. For Plato said (1) that a circle can be considered insofar as it is named or defined—insofar as it is mentally depicted or mentally conceived—and (2) that from these [considerations] the nature of a circle is not known, but (3) that the circle's quiddity (which is simple and incorruptible and free of all contraries) is seen by the intellect alone.¹³³ Indeed, Plato made similar statements regarding all [such things]. But neither Plato nor anyone else whom I have read turned to those views that I presented in my fourth remark.¹³⁴ For if Plato had considered that [claim], assuredly he would have found that our mind, which constructs mathematical entities, has these mathematical entities, which are in its power, more truly present with itself than as they exist outside the mind.

56 For example, man knows the mechanical art, and he has the forms of this art more truly in his mental concept than as they are formable outside his mind—just as a house, which is made by means of an art, has a truer form in the mind than in the pieces of wood. For the form

that comes to characterize the wood is the mental form, idea, or exemplar. A similar point holds true regarding all other such things—regarding a circle, a line, a triangle, and regarding our numbers and all other such things which have their beginning from our mind's concepts and which lack a nature.¹³⁵ But it does not follow that the house which exists in terms of wood (i.e., the perceptible house) exists more truly in the mind—even though the form of the house is a truer form in the mind.¹³⁶ For there is required—for the true being of the house and because of the end for the sake of which the house exists—that the house be perceptible. And so, the house cannot have a form that exists as separated from it, as Aristotle rightly saw.¹³⁷ Hence, although forms and numbers and all such intellectual entities (which are entities of our reason and which lack a nature) exist more truly in their beginning, viz., in the human intellect, nevertheless it does not follow that therefore all perceptible objects (whose essence it is to be perceptible) exist more truly in the intellect than in the senses.

And so, Plato is seen wrongly to have concluded—when he saw that mathematical entities, which are abstracted from perceptible objects,¹³⁸ are truer in the mind—that therefore they have another, still truer, supra-intellectual being. But Plato could rightly have said that just as the forms of a [given] human art are truer in their beginning, viz., in the human mind, than they are in matter, so the forms of nature's Beginning (i.e., natural forms) are truer in that Beginning than they are outside it.¹³⁹ And if the Pythagoreans, and whatever others, had reflected in this same way, they would have seen clearly that mathematical entities and numbers (which proceed from our mind and which exist in the way in which we conceive them) are not substances or beginnings of perceptible things but are only the beginnings of rational entities of which we are the creators.

57 Similarly, you see how it is that those things which cannot be made by our art exist more truly in perceptible objects than in our intellect. For example, fire has truer existence in its perceptible substance than in our intellect, where it is present in a confused concept and apart from its natural reality [*naturalis veritas*]. The case is similar regarding all other [natural objects]. However, fire has [even] truer existence in its Creator, where it is present in its adequate Cause and Rational Ground. And although in the Divine Intellect it is not present together with its perceptible qualities, which we perceive in it, nevertheless it is not therefore any the less truly present there (just as a duke's dignity is present more truly in the king's dignity, even

though it does not exist there with its ducal function). For in this present world fire has its properties in regard to other perceptible objects; by means of these properties fire exercises its operations on other things. Since fire has these properties in regard to other things in this world, the properties do not unqualifiedly belong to its essence. Therefore, fire does not have need of the properties when it is freed from this exercise and from this world. Nor does it seek them in the intelligible world, where there is no contrariety—as Plato rightly said,¹⁴⁰ of a circle, that as it is described in the floor it is full of contrarities and is corruptible in accordance with spatial conditions but that in the intellect it is free of these [conditions and contrarities].

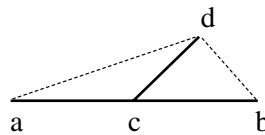
58 It seems good to add, further, as regards specific forms (since they are neither made nor corrupted except accidentally, and since they are incorruptible likenesses of the divine, infinite Intellect) how the following can be understood: viz., that the Divine Intellect shines forth in every specific form. For [this shining forth does] not [occur] in the way in which a single face [appears] in many mirrors but, rather, as a single infinite-magnitude [appears] in different finite magnitudes—and [appears] as a whole in each of them. I acknowledge that I conceive of this [appearing] in such a way that every finite specific form is as a triangle with respect to the triangle's surface magnitudes. For a triangle is the first finite and terminated magnitude; in it the infinite angle shines forth as a whole. For the infinite angle is an angle that is both maximal and minimal; and so, it is infinite and immeasurable because it does not admit of more or less but is the beginning of all triangles. For we cannot [truly] say that two right angles are greater or lesser than the angle that is both maximal and minimal. For as long as the maximal angle is seen to be less than two right angles, it is not unqualifiedly maximal. But every triangle has three angles equal to two right angles. Therefore, in every triangle there shines forth, as a whole, the infinite beginning of all angles.

59 And because (1) a triangle does not have prior to it any angular, rectilinear, terminated surface consisting of [merely] one or two angles but (2) it itself is the first terminated surface,¹⁴¹ it is likenable unto incorruptible specific form and unto incorruptible first substance. For a triangle is not resolvable into what is not-a-triangle; and so, it is not resolvable into any shape whose three angles are greater or lesser [than two right angles]. Yet, there can be different triangles: some are acute, others are obtuse, others are right triangles; and those, in turn, can be different.¹⁴² Something similar will hold true regarding

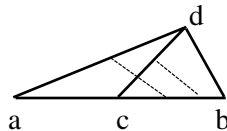
specific forms. But all specific forms are perfect and determinate first substances, since in them the First Beginning, as a whole, shines forth with its incorruptibility and greatness [*magnitudo*] in a finite and determinate way.

- 60 And in order that you may make a clear conceptualization with regard to the foregoing [teaching], look through the beryl at the triangle that is both maximal and minimal. It will be an object that is the beginning of triangles, just as you saw previously,¹⁴³ in a symbolism, regarding angles.¹⁴⁴

Let there be a line $a b$ from whose midpoint the movable line $c d$ departs—so that from d a line is extended all the way to b and [another line] all the way to a ; these lines enclose

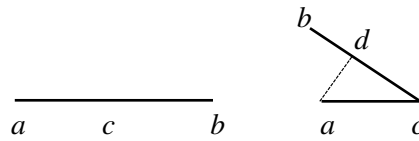


the surface. However much [the figure] is changed through the movement of $c d$ when it is turned on c , the one triangle never becomes maximal (as is evident) as long as the other triangle is *another* triangle.¹⁴⁵ And so, if the one triangle is to become maximal, the other has to become minimal. And this [result] is not seen to occur before $c d$ lies on $c b$ and before $d a$ is $b a$ —and thus there is a straight line, which is the beginning of the angles and triangles.



Therefore, in this beginning—which I see by way of the angle that is both maximal and minimal (and, therewith, by way of the maximal and minimal triangle) and which is a triune beginning—I see both all angles and all triangles to be enfolded, so that *in* the beginning each angle, which is one and three,¹⁴⁶ is the beginning. And so, the triune beginning, which is both one and three, shines forth in each finite triangle, which is both one and three—shines forth in the best way in which the one and trine infinite triangle can shine forth in a finite triangle. And in a similar way you see how it is that specific form is constituted by means of a completed enfold-ing: viz., when it is completely reflected upon itself by uniting its end to its beginning. By way of illustration: [when] line $a b$ is first

of all folded into an angle at point c



and when thereafter $c b$ is folded at point d so that b returns to a , there arises by means of such a double reflectedness a triangle—[illustrative of] a determinate incorruptible specific form—whose beginning and end coincide.

- 61** Consider the following symbolism, which, assuredly, leads subtly to the concept of specific form. A triangle, whether large or small with respect to its perceptible quantity or surface, is equal to every other triangle as concerns both the trinity of angles and the magnitude of the three angles.¹⁴⁷ In this way you see [illustratively] that every specific form is equal in magnitude to every other specific form. Assuredly, this magnitude cannot be quantity, since quantity admits of more and less; rather, the magnitude is simple substantial magnitude that is prior to all perceptible quantity. Therefore, when a triangle is viewed in a surface, [this viewing] is seeing a specific form in the subject of which it is the specific form. And *there* I see a substance which has been made and which is the thing's essential being; e.g., the substance is a right triangle because it is the essential being of a right triangle. The triangle acquires this essential being, as a whole, by way of the specific form, which gives this being.
- 62** Note how it is that [the specific form] gives not only generic triangular being but also right-triangular being or acute triangular being or obtuse triangular being or being that in some other way is differentiated from these. And, thus, the specific form is the specification of the genus by way of difference. Specification is a union that unites difference to a genus; and so, the specific form gives a thing's entire being. Hence, the specific form—one of which is distinct from another—is not *other* than the subject but has within itself its own essential principles, by means of which it is determined substantially—just as a geometrical figure is contained within its own bounds, and just as occurs in the case of a harmony or in the case of numbers. For example, harmonic forms are varied. For the generic harmony is variously specified through various differences. And the union by which a difference (e.g., treble with base) is united [to the genus]—a difference which is the species—has within itself a proportionate harmony

that is determined (distinctly from all other species) by its own essential principles. Therefore, the specific form is as a certain harmonic relation which, although it is one, is nevertheless communicable to many subjects. For the relation or proportionality is incorruptible and can be said to be a specific form, which does not admit of more or less and which gives form or beauty to a subject, just as proportion adorns things beautiful. For, indeed, a likeness of Eternal Reason, or of the divine Creator-Intellect, shines forth in harmonic or concordant proportion. And we experience this fact, since that proportion is delightful and pleasing to each of the senses whenever it is perceived.

63 How near-at-hand is the symbolism which centers on numbers!—if numbers are taken for proportion, or relation. In numbers relation is made perceptible, just as a triangle [is made perceptible] in a surface or in a quantity. And the simpler the discrete quantity is than is continuous quantity, the better the specific form is viewed by means of the symbolism of discrete quantity than it is viewed by means of the symbolism of continuous quantity. For mathematics concerns intellectual material, as Aristotle rightly said.¹⁴⁸ But its “material” is magnitude, without which a mathematician does not conceive of anything. Yet, discrete magnitude is simpler—and more immaterial—than is continuous magnitude. And it is more similar to specific form, which is altogether simple, even though, assuredly, the simplicity of specific form—a simplicity which is the quiddity—is prior to the simplicity of that discrete magnitude. And so, [quiddity] cannot be conceived,¹⁴⁹ since it precedes all magnitude that can be conceived. For no intellectual conception can be made apart from magnitude. And a more subtle conception comes [closer] to the aforementioned discrete magnitude, which is free from all discrete perceptible quantity. And so, first substance—whose simplicity precedes every manner of accident (whether as accident is present in perceptible being or as it is present in mathematical being, which is abstracted from perceptible being)¹⁵⁰—cannot be conceived by our intellect, which is bound to a body, i.e., to quantity, as to an instrument with whose assistance it conceives. Nevertheless, our intellect sees first substance beyond all concepts.

64 Consider, furthermore, how it is that we take very great delight in a certain color and, likewise, in a [certain] voice or song and in other things perceptual. The reason [for this delight] is that the sensitive soul’s being alive is its perceiving.¹⁵¹ And [its life] consists not in perceiving this or that¹⁵² but consists in everything perceptible, taken

together. And so, [the soul delights] more in that perceptible object in which it apprehends more of the object—i.e., in which what-is-perceivable is present in a certain harmonic union, as when a color contains in itself, harmoniously, many colors, and a harmonious song contains many differences of voice, and likewise regarding other perceptible objects. The situation is similar with regard to *intelligible* objects, where [the intellect apprehends], in one beginning, many differences among intelligible things. And hence it is that to understand the First Beginning (in which is present the entire Rational Ground of [all] things) is the supreme life of the intellect and is its immortal delight.

Similarly, a specific form is a certain whole that consists of one perfect mode-of-being having divine likeness and that enfolds in itself all particular contractions; in an object [*subiectum*] the specific form is contracted to that [particular] being. Therefore, by way of the beryl you will be able to see the Beginning in the way often mentioned. And [you will be able to see] (1) how all specific forms are divine because of a substantial and perfect likeness to Eternal Reason and (2) how it is that the Creator-Intellect manifests itself in the specific forms and (3) that the specific form (a) is the word or intention of the [Divine] Intellect, which manifests itself specifically in this way, and (b) is the Quiddity of each individual.¹⁵³ And so, every individual cherishes supremely its specific form and takes every precaution not to lose it; and to guard it is something most pleasing to it and most desired by it.¹⁵⁴

65 There still remains one thing: viz., to see how it is that man is the measure of things.¹⁵⁵ Aristotle says that by means of this [expression] Protagoras stated nothing profound. Nevertheless, Protagoras seems to me to have expressed [herein] especially important [truths]. First of all, I consider Aristotle rightly to have stated, at the outset of his *Metaphysics*, that all men by nature desire to know.¹⁵⁶ He makes this statement in regard to the sense of sight, which a man possesses not simply for the sake of working; rather, we love sight for the sake of knowing, because sight manifests to us many differences. If, then, man has senses and reason not only in order to use them for preserving his life but also in order to know, then perceptible objects have to nourish man for two purposes: viz., in order that he may live and in order that he may know. But knowing is more excellent and more noble, because it has a higher and more incorruptible goal. Earlier on,¹⁵⁷ we presupposed that the Divine Intellect created all things in order to manifest itself; likewise, the Apostle Paul, writing to the Romans, says that the

invisible God is known in and through the visible things of the world.¹⁵⁸ So visible things exist in order that the Divine Intellect—the Maker of all things—may be known in and through them.

66 Therefore, the diversity of perceptible objects is proportional to the power of the cognitive nature in the human senses, which partake of the light-of-reason that is united to them.¹⁵⁹ For perceptible objects are the senses' books; in these books the intention of the Divine Intellect is described in perceptible figures. And the intention is the manifestation of God the Creator. Therefore, if regarding any given thing you are puzzled as to why it is such and such or why it exists in the way it does, there is an answer: viz., because the Divine Intellect willed to manifest itself to the perceptual cognition in order to be known perceptibly. For instance, why is there in the perceptible world so much contrariety? You are to reply: "because opposites juxtaposed to each other are more elucidating, and because there is a single knowledge of both." Knowledge in terms of the senses is so weak that without contrariety the senses could not apprehend differences. Therefore, each of the senses desires contrary objects, in order better to discern. And so, those contraries which are required to this end [of discernment] are present in the objects. Thus, if you proceed by way of touch, taste, smell, sight, and hearing, and if you consider carefully how each sense has a power of knowing, then you will find that all objects in the perceptible world are ordained to the service of the cognitive [nature]. Thus, the contrariety of primary qualities serves the tactile [power]; the contrariety of colors serves the eyes; and [the case is] similar regarding all [the senses]. In all these different [ways] the manifestation of the Divine Intellect is so very wonderful.

67 After Anaxagoras saw Intellect to be the beginning and cause of things—and assigned, in doubtful cases [of things' being moved], causes other than Intellect—he was reproached by Plato in the *Phaedo*¹⁶⁰ and by Aristotle in the *Metaphysics*¹⁶¹ for allegedly claiming that Intellect is the beginning of the universe-of-things but not the beginning of individual things. Since they saw that in this respect Anaxagoras was reproachable and since they agreed with each other about the beginning, I am amazed at these [two] leaders among philosophers—amazed at why they themselves investigated other causes but are found to have erred similarly on that very point on which they criticized Anaxagoras. Now, this [inconsistency] happened to them as a result of a wrong presupposition, since they imposed necessity on the First Cause. Hence, if in their every inquiry they had

looked unto the true Cause of the establishing of the universe—the Cause which we have premised—they would have found the one true solution regarding all their perplexities. For example, what does the Creator intend when from a thorny bush he brings forth so beautiful and fragrant a perceptible rose by means of the movement of the heavens and the instrument of nature? What else can be replied except that that marvelous Intellect intends to manifest Himself in that “word” of His? [He intends to manifest] of what great wisdom and rationality He is—and what the riches of His glory¹⁶² are—when by means of a small perceptible thing He so easily places such great beauty, so lovely proportioned, in the presence of the cognitive senses, [placing it there] together with a movement of joy and with a most pleasing harmony that gladdens a man’s entire nature. And in an even clearer manner He manifests Himself in the vegetable life by which the rose thrives. And [He manifests Himself] in a still clearer shining forth [of His glory] in the intellective life, which (1) beholds all things perceptible and (2) beholds how glorious that Commander is, who through nature, as through a law, commands all things and conserves all things (conserving above time in the case of incorruptible specific form, and conserving temporally in the case of individual things) and (3) beholds that all things arise by, and are moved by, this law of nature and do what the law of nature commands. In this law only that Intellect is operative, as the Author of all things.

- 69 Aristotle saw this very point: viz., that if perceptual cognition is removed, perceptible objects are removed.¹⁶³ For he says in the *Metaphysics*: “If there were not things that are enlivened, there would not be either senses or perceptible objects.”¹⁶⁴ (He says many other things there about this topic.) Protagoras, then, rightly stated that man is the measure of things. Because man knows—by reference to the nature of his perceptual [cognition]—that perceptible objects exist for the sake of that cognition, he measures perceptible objects in order to be able to apprehend, perceptually, the glory of the Divine Intellect. Similarly, with regard to things intelligible when we refer them to intellective cognition: at length, from that same consideration, man reflects upon the fact that the intellective nature is immortal—[doing so] in order that the Divine Intellect, in its immortality, can manifest itself to him. And, likewise, there becomes more evident the evangelical teaching which posits as the goal of creation that the “God of gods in Zion”¹⁶⁵ be seen in the majesty of His glory. This glorious majesty is the manifestation of the Father, in whom is all sufficiency.¹⁶⁶ And this

Savior of ours, through whom God made even the ages¹⁶⁷ (viz., the Word of God), promises that on that day He will manifest Himself and that then they will live with a life that is eternal.

70 The foregoing manifestation is to be conceived [along the following lines: viz.,] as if by means of a single viewing someone were to behold the intellect of Euclid and as if this viewing were the apprehension of the same art that Euclid unfolds in his *Elements*. In a similar way, the Divine Intellect is the Art of the Omnipotent One—by means of which Art the Omnipotent One created the ages and all life and all intelligence. Therefore, to have apprehended this Art—when it manifests itself unconcealedly on that day when the [human] intellect appears naked and pure before God—is to have obtained divine sonship and to have become an heir of the immortal kingdom. For if the intellect has within itself the Art which is creative of everlasting life and joy, then the intellect has obtained ultimate knowledge and happiness.

71 But (1) how it is that knowledge comes about by means of the perceptual forms of the particular senses (forms which specify and determine the generic power of perceiving), and (2) how it is that this receptivity (viz., the receptivity of the imprint of the perceptual forms) becomes an actuality in the senses,¹⁶⁸ and (3) how it is that an intelligence, even though it itself is a simple form, is full of intelligible forms—[all this] you will understand if you attend to how it is that sight enfolds within itself the forms of all visible things and that therefore when these forms are presented to it, it knows them of its own natural power and through its own form, which enfolds within itself the forms of all [visible] things. The situation is similar as regards the intellect, whose form is the simplicity of intelligible forms, which it knows of its own natural power when as naked they are presented to it. And [you will see] something similar when you rise up [speculatively] unto the intelligences,¹⁶⁹ which have a more subtle simplicity-of-form and which view all things—even without those things' being presented to them in and through a [respective] image. And, at length, [you will see] how it is that all things are present so cognitively in the First Intellect that [the First Intellect's] Knowledge gives being to the objects known—just as the [first] Exemplar, in exemplifying itself, is causative of all forms. And [you will understand] why the senses do not attain unto intelligible objects and why the intellect does not attain unto the intelligences and unto things higher than it itself—viz., because no knowledge is possible with respect to that which is

simpler than the cognizer.¹⁷⁰ For to know is to measure.¹⁷¹ But a measure is simpler than the things measurable [by it], even as oneness is the measure of number. Because all these matters are contained enfoldedly in the beryl and in a symbolism, and because many other men have written elegantly about the present topic: for the sake of brevity I will not say more.

72 However, in concluding this present work, I will say with Plato: knowledge (*scientia*) is very concise; it would be communicated better apart from all writing, if there were those men who were seeking and who were [suitably] disposed.¹⁷² Now, Plato regards as [suitably] disposed those (1) who desire, with such great desirousness, to be instructed that they suppose they would rather be dead than be destitute of knowledge and (2) who abstain from sensual vices and sensual pleasures, and (3) who have a bright mind. I agree that all these [criteria] are appropriate; but I add that [the seeker] be, as well, faithful and devoted to God, from whom he may obtain—by means of frequent and imploring prayers—the gift of being enlightened. For God gives wisdom to those who seek it with steadfast faith—steadfast to the extent that it suffices for salvation. To these [seekers] this present work, although not well organized, will furnish material for reflecting on, and for finding out about, quite hidden matters—as well as for attaining higher [truths] and for continually persevering in praise of God, unto whom every soul aspires and who alone does marvelous things and is forever blessed. Praise to God.

August 18, 1458 at Castle St. Raphael.

ABBREVIATIONS

- Ap.* *Apologia Doctae Ignorantiae* [Vol. II (edited by Raymond Klibansky) of *Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia* (Leipzig/Hamburg: F. Meiner Verlag, 1932)].
- CA* *Cribratio Alkorani* [Vol. VIII (edited by Ludwig Hagemann) of *Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia* (Hamburg: F. Meiner Verlag, 1986)].
- DB* *De Beryllo* [Vol. XI, 1 (edited by Hans G. Senger and Karl Bormann) of *Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia* (Hamburg: F. Meiner Verlag, 1988)].
- DC* *De Coniecturis* [Vol. III (edited by Josef Koch and Karl Bormann) of *Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia* (Hamburg: F. Meiner Verlag, 1972)].
- DI* *De Docta Ignorantia* [Latin-German edition: *Schriften des Nikolaus von Kues in deutscher Übersetzung*, published by F. Meiner Verlag. **Book I** (Vol. 264a), edited and translated by Paul Wilpert; 3rd edition with minor improvements by Hans G. Senger, 1979. **Book II** (Vol. 264b), edited and translated by Paul Wilpert; 2nd edition with minor improvements by Hans G. Senger, 1977. **Book III** (Vol. 264c); Latin text edited by Raymond Klibansky; introduction and translation by Hans G. Senger, 1977].
- DM* *Idiota de Mente* [Latin text contained in J. Hopkins, *Nicholas of Cusa on Wisdom and Knowledge* (Minneapolis: Banning, 1996)].
- DP* *De Possess* [Latin text as contained in J. Hopkins, *A Concise Introduction to the Philosophy of Nicholas of Cusa* (Minneapolis: Banning, 3rd ed. 1986)].
- DVD* *De Visione Dei* [Latin text as contained in J. Hopkins, *Nicholas of Cusa's Dialectical Mysticism: Text, Translation, and Interpretive Study of De Visione Dei* (Minneapolis: Banning, 2nd ed. 1988)].
- MFCCG* *Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft*, edited by Klaus Kremer and Klaus Reinhardt. A continuing series. Volumes I-XVII published in Mainz, Germany by Matthias-Grünewald Verlag. Volumes XVIII and higher published in Trier by Paulinus-Verlag.
- NA* *De Li Non Aliud* [Latin text as contained in J. Hopkins, *Nicholas of Cusa on God as Not-other: A Translation and an Appraisal of De Li Non Aliud* (Minneapolis: Banning, 3rd ed. 1987)].
- PG* *Patrologia Graeca*, edited by J.-P. Migne. Series published in Paris.
- PL* *Patrologia Latina*, edited by J.-P. Migne. Series published in Paris.
- SCG* Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles* [in Vol. II, edited by R. Busa (1980), of *Index Thomisticus. Sancti Thomae Aquinatis Opera Omnia*. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog Verlag].

- ST Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* [in Vol. II (1980) of *Index Thomisticus*, *ibid.*].
- VS *De Venatione Sapientiae* [Vol. XII (edited by Raymond Klibansky and Hans G. Senger) of *Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia* (Hamburg: F. Meiner Verlag, 1982)].

PRAENOTANDA

1. (a) In the English translations brackets are used to indicate words supplied by the translator to complete the meaning of a Latin phrase, clause, or sentence. (b) When a clarifying Latin word is inserted into the translation, brackets (rather than parentheses) are used if the case ending or the verb-form has been modified.
2. All references to Nicholas of Cusa's works are to the Latin texts in the following editions (unless explicitly indicated otherwise):
 - A. Heidelberg Academy edition of *Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia* (Felix Meiner Verlag: Hamburg): *De Concordantia Catholica*; *De Coniecturis*; *De Deo Abscondito*; *De Quaerendo Deum*; *De Filiatione Dei*; *De Dato Patris Luminum*; *Coniectura de Ultimis Diebus*; *De Genesi*; *Apologia Doctae Ignorantiae*; *De Pace Fidei*; *De Beryllo* (1988 edition); *Cribratio Alkorani*; *De Principio*; *De Theologicis Complementis*; *De Venatione Sapientiae*; *De Apice Theoriae.*; *Sermones* (Haubst's numbering of the sermons is given in roman numerals; Koch's numbering is given in arabic numerals.)
 - B. Texts authorized by the Heidelberg Academy and published in the Latin-German editions of Felix Meiner Verlag's series *Philosophische Bibliothek*: *De Docta Ignorantia*.
 - C. Editions by J. Hopkins: *De Aequalitate* (1998); *Idiotae de Sapientia, de Mente, de Staticis Experimentis* (1996); *De Visione Dei* (1988); *De Possest* (1986); *De Li Non Aliud* (1987); *Compendium* (1996). Except in the case of *De Aequalitate*, the left-hand margin numbers correspond to the margin numbers in the Heidelberg Academy editions; line numbers and some paragraph-breaks differ.
 - D. Paris edition of the *Opera Omnia Cusani* (1514): *De Ludo Globi*.
 The references given for some of these treatises indicate book and chapter, for others margin number and line, and for still others page and line. Readers should have no difficulty determining which is which when they consult the particular Latin text. E.g., 'DI II, 6 (125:19-20)' indicates *De Docta Ignorantia*, Book II, Chapter 6, margin number 125, lines 19-20 of the edition in the series *Philosophische Bibliothek* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag).
3. The folio numbers in the right-hand margin of the Latin text of *De Aequalitate* correspond to the folios in Codex Latinus Vaticanus 1245.

4. References to the Bible are given in terms of the Douay version. References to chapters and verses of the Psalms include, in parentheses, the King James' locations.
5. Italics are used sparingly, so that, as a rule, foreign expressions are italicized only when they are short. All translations are mine unless otherwise specifically indicated.
6. Citations of Nicholas's sermons are given in terms of the sermon numbers assigned by Rudolf Haubst in fascicle 0 [=zero], Vol. XVI of *Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia* (Hamburg: F. Meiner Verlag, 1991).

NOTES TO *DE BERYLLO*

1. This work was completed in 1458 in Buchenstein, Austria (diocese Brixen) at Castle Andraz, called by Nicholas Castle St. Raphael. See the map on the inside back cover of Wilhelm Baum's *Nikolaus Cusanus in Tirol. Das Wirken des Philosophen und Reformators als Fürstbischof von Brixen* (Bolzano: Athesia, 1983), as well as a picture of the castle on p. 264.

Among the mss. in which *De Beryllo* is preserved, I have consulted Codex Latinus Cusanus 219, Codex Latinus Monacensis 18621, and Codex Latinus Yale 334. Except if indicated otherwise, the present translation follows the Heidelberg critical edition of the Latin text edited by Hans G. Senger and Karl Bormann (Hamburg: Meiner, 1988). The margin numbers—but not all of the paragraph beginnings—correspond to the numbers in that edition. Regarding the translation of the title "*De Beryllo*" see *Compendium* 6 (18:3-5). See also *De Beryllo* 3.

2. The word "*libellus*" and its plural, "*libelli*," do not necessarily indicate brief works. *De Docta Ignorantia*, for example, is scarcely a short work, any more than is *De Coniecturis*. Both of these works are included among the *libelli* here being referred to. Oftentimes "*libellus*" is used as a sign of modesty. Critics have sometimes not recognized this fact. (A corresponding point holds true for the use of "*opusculum*".) See my critique of Thomas Losoncy on pp. 283-284 (n. 23) of my *Miscellany on Nicholas of Cusa* (1994). When Nicholas wants to indicate a short work, he may well use "*libellus brevis*," as he does at *De Beryllo* 1:10-11. But he may also say, simply, "*libellus*," as he does at *De Beryllo* 41:6. In any event, "*libellus brevis*" is not necessarily a redundant expression.

3. E.g., *DI* I, 4-5 and I, 13. *DC* I, 6 (23) *et passim*. *DVD* 10.

4. Here Nicholas pointedly makes a distinction between *intellectualis visio* and *ratio*. This distinction is repeated elsewhere in the treatise (e.g., at 32:7-10). It corresponds to the distinction between *intellectus* and *ratio*. [See Hermann Schnarr, *Modi essendi. Interpretationen zu den Schriften De docta ignorantia, De coniecturis und De venatione sapientiae von Nikolaus von Kues*. Münster: Aschendorff, 1973.] Though in *De Beryllo* Nicholas makes little systematic use of the distinction, nevertheless its presence requires acknowledgement. Cf. pp. 289-293 (n. 17) of my *Miscellany on Nicholas of Cusa* (1994). Also note *De Quaerendo Deum* 2 (35) and 5 (49).

5. The words "very weighty opinions" translate "*graviore ... sententias et opiniones*" at 1:7-8.

6. The list of these men includes not only (Pseudo-)Dionysius the Areopagite and Albertus Magnus but also Plato, Aristotle, Proclus, Avicenna, and Averroës, as well as others such as Anaxagoras, Protagoras, Eusebius of Caesarea, Avicbron, and

Isaac Israeli.

7. The single expression “of applying” translates adequately the compound expression “*applicandi et extendendi*” at 1:13.

8. Plato, *Epistola* 2 (314A).

9. Pseudo-Dionysius, *De Mystica Theologia* I, 2 (*Dionysiaca* I, 569-570. *PG* 3:999A).

10. I Corinthians 2:14.

11. Nicholas uses “*intellectus*” to translate Anaxagoras’s word “*νοῦς*”.

12. See *De Beryllo* 66.

13. Cf. Augustine: “et omnia vera sunt, in quantum sunt: nec quidquam est falsitas nisi cum putatur esse quod non est” [*Confessiones* VII, 15.21 (*PL* 32:744)].

14. In naming the three cognitive modes, Nicholas conflates the perceptual and the imaginative, the rational and the intellectual. Elsewhere within *De Beryllo* itself he distinguishes these. See, for example, 15:11 and 24:2.

15. In translating “*sensibilis*” I use the English words “perceptual” and “perceptible,” more or less interchangeably, though with an eye to the nuances in English. Nicholas’s own usage of terms such as “*sensibilis*” and “*intelligibilis*” is very loose. For example, at *De Beryllo* 29:12 he writes “*anima sensibilis*,” whereas at 29:21 he says “*anima sensitiva*.” In the present section (viz., section 5) he is willing to say either “*sensibilis species*” (5:7) or “*sensitiva species*” (5:8); and he is willing to use “*intelligentiale*” interchangeably with “*intellectibile*” (5:12). See n. 18 on p. 296 of my *Miscellany on Nicholas of Cusa* (1994). See also, below, n. 32 of Notes to *De Apice Theoriae*.

16. Nicholas distinguishes between human beings, who have intellect (*intellectus*), and angels, who are intelligences (*intelligentiae*). The realm of these intelligences is the realm of the intelligential or intellectible. See, above, n. 15. Also see *DM* 14 and *DC* I, 4 (14-16). Cf. n. 78 and n. 80, on p. 504, with n. 124 on p. 506 of my *Nicholas of Cusa on Wisdom and Knowledge* (1996).

Here in *De Beryllo* the domain of *ratio* is not explicitly distinguished from the realm of *intellectus*. See, above, n. 4. See also *DM* 2 (65). *De Genesi* 4 (168:12-16).

17. At *De Genesi ad Litteram* I.9.15 (*PL* 34:252) Augustine calls *spiritualis creatura* by the name “*caelum*,” i.e., a “heaven,” or a “domain.”

18. See the further discussion (of Protagoras’s doctrine) that begins in *De Beryllo* 65. Nicholas’s appropriation of Protagoras’s doctrine of *homo mensura* differs widely from Protagoras’s own understanding of it; for, ultimately, according to Nicholas, God is the Measure of all things (*DB* 12; cf. *DB* 54:1-3).

19. In *De Mente* Nicholas makes much of the idea that the human mind *takes* the measure of all things. [The word “*mens*,” he claims, derives from “*mensurare*”. *DM* 1 (57).] Yet, the mind also *sets* measuring standards—for example, by dividing time into years, months, days, hours, minutes, and seconds. In this regard, man is the measure. [See *De Aequalitate* 13 and *VS* 27 (82:13-20).] However, in making this point, Nicholas is not moving toward a Kantian-like transcendental idealism. See, below, at the end of n. 51 of Notes to *De Aequalitate*, the reference to the perceptive comments of Hans G. Senger and Hermann Schnarr.

20. That is: ... when he knows that things are knowable for the sake of the development of the cognizing soul. Cf. *De Beryllo* 66.

21. Created things exist in the mind not as themselves but as mind. They exist

there insofar as they are known or are possible to be known. Transcendent things are known in the sense that they are known to be transcendent. Cf. *DM* 3 (72:13-17).

22. Hermes Trismegistus, *Asclepius* I, 6 [*Corpus Hermeticum*, text edited by Arthur D. Nock (Paris: Société d'Édition "Les Belles Lettres," Vol. 2, 1945, p. 302, lines 1-2)]: "... [homo] in naturam dei transit, quasi ipse sit deus"

23. *DM* 6 (88:21-22). *DM* 7 (99:7-10). *Compendium* 8 (23:8-10).

24. That is, the symbolism does not capture the Reality as it is in itself.

25. This allusion to Socrates is perhaps drawn from Eusebius's *De Evangelica Praeparatione* XI, 3 (*PG* 21:850A). At *De Beryllo* 39 Nicholas mentions Eusebius's work.

26. Pseudo-Dionysius, *De Divinis Nominibus* V, 7 (*Dionysiaca* I, 346-348. *PG* 3:822B). Nicholas's numbering of the chapters in Pseudo-Dionysius's *De Divinis Nominibus* does not fully conform to the order of the editions printed in *Dionysiaca*.)

27. Pseudo-Dionysius, *De Divinis Nominibus* V, 7 (*Dionysiaca* I, 349. *PG* 3:822C). The Latin text of Ambrose Traversari in *Dionysiaca* reads "*ab ipso esse*" whereas Nicholas's quotation has only "*ipso esse*".

28. Pseudo-Dionysius, *De Divinis Nominibus* V, 10 (*Dionysiaca* I, 364-365. *PG* 3:826B).

29. Pseudo-Dionysius, *De Divinis Nominibus* V, 8 (*Dionysiaca* I, 359. *PG* 3:823C). Nicholas of Cusa, *DP* 21.

30. *DI* II, 3. *DP* 14.

31. Cf. *DI* I, 16 (45-46). *DP* 9 and 13.

32. Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem* VI (1074 [Cousin edition]). See *Proclus' Commentary on Plato's Parmenides*, translated by Glenn R. Morrow and John M. Dillon (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), pp. 426-427. The English translation is made from Victor Cousin's 1864 Paris edition of the Greek text, and the numbers given in parentheses are the page numbers of that edition. The Paris edition was reprinted in 1961 in Hildesheim, Germany by Georg Olms Verlag.

33. Pseudo-Dionysius, *De Mystica Theologia* I, 3 (*Dionysiaca* I, 576-578. *PG* 3:999D - 1002A).

34. Aristotle, *Metaphysica* XII, 2 (1069^b20ff.).

35. God is neither a *numerical* oneness nor a *numerical* trineness. For as Infinite, He is "neither trine nor one nor any of those things that can be spoken of" [*PF* 7 (21:1-2)]. See also *DI* I, 5 (14:1-8). For a fuller treatment of this topic see William of Ockham, "Utrum Trinitas Personarum Sit Verus Numerus," *Distinctiones* I, 24, 2 [*Guillelm de Ockham Opera Philosophica et Theologica*, Vol. IV: *Distinctiones XIX - XLVIII*, edited by G. Etzkorn and F. Kelley (St. Bonaventure, NY: St. Bonaventure University, 1979)].

36. Hermes Trismegistus, *Treatise* V, 10 (*Corpus Hermeticum*, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 64). *Asclepius* VI, 20 (*Corpus Hermeticum*, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 320). Nicholas of Cusa, *DP* 10-12.

37. Augustine, *Confessiones* X, 6.9 (*PL* 32:783).

38. I Corinthians 13:12.

39. See n. 4 above.

40. Plato, *Epistola* II (312E).

41. Plato, *Epistola* II (312E - 313A).

42. Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem*, *op. cit.* (n. 32 above), VI (1107-1108). See

Proclus' Commentary on Plato's Parmenides, *op. cit.*, pp. 452-453.

43. Aristotle, *Metaphysica* XII, 10 (1075^a11-15).

44. Nicholas is not here endorsing pantheism. To say that in God all things are God is not to say, *simpliciter*, that all things are God. See n. 81 below.

45. Averroës, *Aristotelis Opera cum Averrois Commentariis*. Vol. VIII: *Metaphysica* [Venice, 1562 (reprinted in Frankfurt am Main: Minerva, 1962)]. See f. 305^vaI (commentary 18): “Et ideo dicitur, quod omnes proportionales, et formae sunt in potentia in prima materia, et in actu in primo motore” Also see f. 303^bE (commentary 18): “nihil cogit nos dicere formas Platonis.”

46. Albertus Magnus, *Super Dionysium de Divinis Nominibus* V, 37 (p. 325, lines 11-23) [Münster: Aschendorff, 1972 (Vol. 37, Part I, edited by Paul Simon)]. See also Cusa, *De Aequalitate* 24:16-18. *DB* 25.

47. According to Nicholas God is the Exemplar of all things [*DM* 5 (85:4) and *DM* 6 (92:15-16)], so that there is not a plurality of exemplars in the Divine Mind. Nonetheless, Nicholas often uses common philosophical parlance and refers to the Divine Mind as if there were exemplars in it.

48. Psalms 134:6 (135:6).

49. *Corpus Iuris Civilis: Iustiniani Digesta* I, 4.1 [*Digesta* edited by Theodor Mommsen (Berlin: Weidmann, 1877 (Vol. I))].

50. Albertus Magnus, *Super Dionysium*, *op. cit.*, V, 32 (p. 322, lines 14-17).

51. *NA* 16 (79:5-6).

52. “Non est nisi una omnium causa creatrix posse fieri omnium et ... illa omne posse fieri praecedat sitque ipsius terminus; quae nec est nominabilis nec participabilis, sed eius similitudo in omnibus participatur.” *VS* 7 (16:4-7).

53. “For [one thing] cannot be received in another thing except in a manner other than [it is in itself].” *De Dato Patris Luminum* 2 (99:9). Cf. *DB* 5:2-5. *De Filiatione Dei* 1 (54:21-22) and 3 (62:4-5). *DC*, Prologue, Book I (3:1-2) and I, 11 (54:6-25). *DP* 40:16 and 62:13. Cf. also Aquinas, *ST* I.75.5c: “Manifestum est enim quod omne quod recipitur in aliquo, recipitur in eo per modum recipientis.”

54. Nicholas borrows this allusion from Albertus Magnus, *Super Dionysium*, *op. cit.*, V, 22 (p. 315, lines 62-74). The sentence is not actually found in Avicbron's treatise. See Ibn Gabirol's (i.e., Avicbron's) *Fons Vitae*, edited by Clemens Baeumker in *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters*, Vol. I (1895).

55. See n. 47 above.

56. *DM* 1 (57:5-7): “mind is that from which derive the boundary and the measurement of every [respective] thing. Indeed, I surmise that mind [*mens*] takes its name from measuring [*mensurare*].”

57. See n. 4 above. Cf. *DC* II, 16 (166:1-2): “Intellectus igitur, quae est rationis unitas, ea ipsa ratione mediante corpori iungitur”

58. In *Compendium* 11 (36:1-2), as also in *De Beryllo* 26:5-6, Nicholas calls the sensitive soul the likeness of the intellect.

59. Nicholas here refers to the doctrine that the rational soul—and, in particular, the intellect—is the form of the body.

60. “... in a final way”: Nicholas alludes to the Aristotelian-Scholastic notion of final cause.

61. Such conformity relates to the Divine Mind as Creator—not to the human

mind. The point being made here is not Kantian-like, so to speak.

62. Plato, *Republic* VI (508A-509B).

63. Pseudo-Dionysius, *De Divinis Nominibus* IV, 1 (*Dionysiaca* I, 146-147. *PG* 3:694B).

64. Albertus Magnus, *Super Dionysium*, *op. cit.*, I, 57 (p. 35, lines 56-61).

65. Albertus Magnus, *Super Dionysium*, *op. cit.*, IV, 3 (p. 114, lines 43-53).

66. It is uncertain which passage is being alluded to.

67. Aristotle, *Metaphysica* II, 1 (993^b24-26). Cf. Albertus Magnus, *Super Dionysium*, *op. cit.*, VII, 8 (p. 342, lines 34-39).

68. I have put into single quotation marks the long passage which follows. It partly paraphrases Albert's Latin. See Albertus Magnus, *Super Dionysium*, *op. cit.*, IV, 26 (pp. 132-133).

69. In this section and elsewhere Nicholas uses "*anima sensitiva*" and "*anima sensibilis*" interchangeably. (See n. 15 above.) I have translated both expressions as "sensitive soul".

70. "... in the power of knowing": "*in virtute cognoscendi*" is the reading found in the Heidelberg Academy's edition of *De Beryllo*. Though Codex Cusanus 219, Munich 18621, and Yale University's Latin ms. 334 contain the reading "*in veritate cognoscendi*," the correct reading (viz., the Heidelberg edition's reading) is found in Codex Cusanus 96, which contains Albertus Magnus's commentary on Dionysius's *The Divine Names*. Cf. Albertus Magnus, *Super Dionysium*, *op. cit.*, IV, 26 (p. 132, lines 85-86).

71. Albertus Magnus, *Super Dionysium*, *op. cit.*, I, 30 (p. 15, lines 26-37).

72. The intelligences are the angels. See n. 16 above.

73. Nicholas's epistemology is heavily influenced by Albert's and Thomas's. See the introduction to my *Nicholas of Cusa on Wisdom and Knowledge*.

74. Throughout this present paragraph Nicholas is paraphrasing Albert's views, which he seems implicitly to accept. In the present sentence the notion of comparing one thing with another in order to arrive at a simple-intelligible implies the notion of abstracting. See n. 132 and n. 137 below.

75. Regarding this sentence and the succeeding one, see Isaac Israeli, *Liber de Definicionibus*, edited by J. T. Muckle, in *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Âge*, 12-13 (1937-38), 299-340. See p. 313, line 22 through p. 315, line 12. Cf. Albertus Magnus, *Super Dionysium*, *op. cit.*, IV, 69 (p. 179, lines 61-68) and VII, 8 (p. 342, lines 80-86).

76. Drawn from Albertus Magnus, *Super Dionysium* VII, 8 (p. 342, lines 62-66).

77. Here Nicholas makes an implicit distinction between the operation of reason (*ratio*), viz., inference, and the operation of intellect (*intellectus*), viz., insight. See n. 4 above.

78. Plato, *Epistola* II (312D - 313C).

79. *DI* I, 7 (21). *CA* II, 7 (104).

80. That is, line *c b* is a line that forms different angles by its movement, whereas line *c a* is stationary.

81. Things are in God as God only ontologically prior to their creation—as what is caused is present in the power of its cause and, in the cause, is the cause. As things exist finitely and discretely they are not God. Similarly, although Nicholas says that God is present in all things as an original is present in a mirror-image of itself, he

never says flatly that God is all things. To be sure, Nicholas is not a pantheist. See n. 44 above, as well as, below, n. 48 of Notes to *De Venatione Sapientiae*. Cf. *DI I*, 24 (77:1-7). *DI II*, 3 (111:14-15). *DI II*, 5 (119:12-20). *Ap.* 16 & 17 and 26 & 27. *De Principio* 22:13-14. *VS* 39 (115, end).

82. Aristotle, *Metaphysica* I, 3 (984^b18-20).

83. Plato, *Phaedo* 97B-D.

84. Aristotle, *Metaphysica* I, 3 (984^b15-19).

85. Plato, *Timaeus* 29A and 41A.

86. That is, all things are present in the Father.

87. Cf. *De Beryllo* 17:4-7.

88. Ecclesiasticus 24:14.

89. Colossians 1:15.

90. Plato, *Timaeus* 33B - 34B and 36D-E.

91. Aristotle, *Metaphysica* XII, 7 (1072^a19 - 1072^b13).

92. Aristotle, *Metaphysica* XII, 10 (1076^a4).

93. *DI II*, 10 (151).

94. Though Nicholas sometimes speaks of the world as *emanating* from God [e.g., *DI II*, 4 (116:1-4)], he does not mean emanation in any sense that is at odds with the Christian doctrine of free creation *ex nihilo*. Cf. *DI II*, 13 (178). Also note *VS* 27 (82:10-12): “Sed quia ipsa mens aeterna libera ad creandum et non creandum vel sic vel aliter, suam omnipotentiam, ut voluit, intra se ab aeterno determinavit.” *CA I*, 20 (83:18-19). *CA II*, 3 (94:6-10). *De Beryllo* 38:6-8.

95. Drawn from Albertus Magnus, *Super Dionysium*, *op. cit.*, IV, 9 (p. 117, line 71 through p. 118, line 4).

96. See n. 94 above.

97. Aristotle, *Metaphysica* XII, 7 (1072^b20-21): “αὐτὸν δὲ νοεῖ ὁ νοῦς κατὰ μετάληψιν τοῦ νοητοῦ · νοητὸς γὰρ γίγνεται θιγγάνων καὶ νοῶν, ὥστε ταῦτον νοῦς καὶ νοητόν.”

98. Eusebius of Caesarea, *De Evangelica Praeparatione* (1480 edition) XI, 20 and XI, 10 [*PG* 21:902 and 874].

99. See n. 97 above.

100. Latin: *quo est; quid est; nexus*.

101. The (essential) form determines what a thing is. Matter, or material, is that determinable principle from which, or of which, a thing is made. A primary substance is determinate formed-matter—i.e., is the union, or composite, of form and matter so as to be a determinate substance.

102. Aristotle, *Metaphysica* XII, 2 (1069^b32-34).

103. Aristotle is, of course, “the Philosopher.”

104. *De Mathematica Perfectione*. See Nikolaus von Kues, *Die mathematischen Schriften*, translated into German by Josepha Hofmann (Hamburg: Meiner, 1980), p. 162.

105. Augustine, *Confessiones* VII, 9 (beginning) [*PL* 32:740].

106. John 1:1-14.

107. In the malformed Latin passage that corresponds to this English sentence, I disregard the word “*qui*” (43:7). Regarding Nicholas’s view of concept formation see, below, n. 19 of Notes to *De Aequalitate*, as well as the text marked by that note. See also n. 36 of Notes to *De Venatione Sapientiae*, together with n. 125 of *De Beryllo*.

lo. As for Cusa's view of our knowledge of things' respective essences, see n. 260 of Notes to *De Venatione Sapientiae*.

108. *DI* I, 3 (10:18-19). *Ap.* 28.

109. "... ought to proceed in a similar manner": i.e., ought to proceed according to a similar method. Aristotle, *Politica* I, 1 (1252^a18-23).

110. Aristotle, *Metaphysica* I, 5 (986^a25).

111. The *point* is the minimum of all *lines*. *DI* II, 3 (105:24-25).

112. "... his ignorance of the squaring of the circle": i.e., his ignorance of how to square a circle. See Nicholas's *De Circuli Quadratura* and his *Quadratura Circuli*. A German translation is found in Nikolaus von Kues, *Die mathematischen Schriften*, *op. cit.* (n. 104 above).

113. *De Beryllo* 33.

114. *De Beryllo* 10.

115. Aristotle, *Metaphysica* VII, 1 (1028^b2-4).

116. "... to know essential being": "Scire ... 'quid erat esse' ". Nicholas uses "quid erat esse" and "quod erat esse" to express Aristotle's "τὸ τὶ ἦν εἶναι". I have translated Nicholas's phrases either as "essential form" or as "essence". See Joseph Owens, *The Doctrine of Being in the Aristotelian Metaphysics* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2nd edition, 1963), pp. 179-188.

117. "... only the composite is made": i.e., only the composite—not the form or the matter—is made.

118. Aristotle, *Metaphysica* III, 1 (996^a1-15).

119. Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem*, *op. cit.* (n. 32 above), I (621). See Proclus' *Commentary on Plato's Parmenides*, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

120. God and the intelligences that govern planetary motion exist as pure forms.

121. Nicholas is pointing out that measuring scales [e.g., the (European) meter, the (American and British) foot, the (Roman) sextarius] are lengths established by decree. Since they result from human decisions, their essences can be *precisely* known by human beings—unlike the essences of natural things, according to Nicholas.

122. See n. 49 above.

123. Aristotle, *Metaphysica* IV, 4 (1006^a3-9). Cusanus, *Compendium* 11 (36:8).

124. Here Nicholas implicitly invokes the principle of sufficient reason. His Latin "*essendi ratio*" is the equivalent of the French "*raison d'être*."

125. Nicholas is an empiricist. In various of his works he writes: "sentire quoddam pati est" [*Compendium* 13 (39:21)], "nihil enim est in phantastica quod prius non fuit in sensu" [*Compendium* 4 (9:6-7)], "nihil ... [est] in ratione quod prius non fuit in sensu" [*DM* 2 (64:12-13)], "nihil tale potest esse in intellectu quod prius non fuit in sensu" [*DVD* 24 (107:14-15)]. Cf. n. 132 and n. 137 below.

See also Nicholas's sermon *Spiritus autem Paracletus* (Paris edition, Vol. II, f. 104^r, lines 3 and 4 from bottom) and n. 168 below.

126. *De Beryllo* 52.

127. *De Beryllo* 23.

128. Aristotle, *Metaphysica* VII, 3 (1029^a7-10).

129. Cf. the reference in n. 108 above.

130. *DVD* 16 (71). *VS* 12 (33:8-11).

131. *De Beryllo* 37 (end).

132. With the use of the word “*abicerē*” (“to remove”) Nicholas here indicates the doctrine that the intellect forms (empirical) concepts by *abstracting* from perceptual images. Cf. pp. 29-31 of my *Nicholas of Cusa on Wisdom and Knowledge*. Also note Cusa’s *DI II*, 6 (126:1-2): “... the universal is in the intellect as a result of [the process of] abstracting.” See *De Aequalitate* 5:16, as well as n. 36 of Notes to *De Venatione Sapientiae*.

Nicholas does not deny, flatly, that the human mind knows either its own quiddity or the quiddity of other natural objects. What he denies is that the mind knows these quiddities *precisely*. Cf., below, n. 156, n. 260, and n. 261 of Notes to *De Venatione Sapientiae*.

133. Plato, *Epistola VII* (342B-D).

134. *De Beryllo* 7.

135. A finite line, unlike a natural object, has no essence of its own. Its essence is the infinite line, says Nicholas in *DI I*, 17 (48). By contrast, a natural object has an essence of its own. God is the Essence of each natural object in the sense that He is the Essence of all essences—and, hence, the Essence of each essence. He is the Essence of each thing’s essence in the sense that that thing would not be what it is if God were not what He is. Cf. *Ap.* 26 and 33. Also note *DI I*, 16 (45). *De Dato Patris Luminum* 2 (98). *Sermo* “*Ubi est qui natus est rex Iudaeorum?*,” section 17 on pp. 100 and 102 of Josef Koch, editor, *Vier Predigten im Geiste Eckharts* [Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-historische Klasse (1936/37), 2. Abhandlung]. *VS* 29 (87:7-12). See also, below, n. 68 of Notes to *De Aequalitate*.

136. Cf. Anselm, *Monologion* 36.

137. Nicholas of Cusa’s view of universals is Aristotelian—a moderate realism. Here he agrees explicitly with Aristotle. Cf. *DI II*, 6 (126). See n. 132 above.

138. *De Beryllo* 63. On Nicholas’s view geometrical figures are concepts that the mind abstracts from its perceptual experiences and then idealizes unto precision. See *DM* 7 (especially 103 and 104). Note also *DM* 6 (88:21-24): “For just as our mind is to the Infinite, Eternal Mind, so number [that proceeds] from our mind is to number [that proceeds from the Divine Mind]. And we give our name ‘number’ to number from the Divine Mind, even as to the Divine Mind itself we give the name for our mind.”

139. See n. 136 above.

140. See n. 133 above.

141. “... is the first terminated surface”: i.e., a triangle is the first polygon in the sense that a polygon cannot be constructed with fewer than three lines and three angles. *DI I*, 20 (60:9-11). *DP* 44:17-20.

142. “... these can ... be different”: i.e., one obtuse triangle can differ from another in degree of obtuseness. A similar point holds for acute triangles.

143. *De Beryllo* 10.

144. Nicholas means that just as the minimal-maximal angle is the beginning of all angles, so the minimal-maximal triangle is the beginning of all triangles.

145. “... *quamdiu alius est aliquis alius triangulus*”: In Codex Latinus Cusanus 219 the scribe writes “*quamdiu alius alius est ...*” and deletes both occurrences of “*alius*” after “*quamdiu*”. Codex Latinus Monacensis 18621 and Yale 334 have simply “*quamdiu alius est ...*”

146. *De Beryllo* 33-34. Cf. *DI I*, 14 (37-38): the maximal triangle will be one angle that is three angles.
147. That is, the angles of any triangle sum up to 180 degrees.
148. Aristotle, *Metaphysica* VII, 10 (1036^a2-5). *De Beryllo* 52.
149. That is, a thing's quiddity cannot be conceived *precisely* by any finite mind.
150. *De Beryllo* 56. See n. 138 above.
151. By "sentire" Nicholas means *to sense*, or *to perceive*. Since he makes no distinction between the two, I have preferred to use the language of perceiving. See n. 15 above.
152. The sensitive soul qua sensitive soul does not have the power of discrimination, as Nicholas elsewhere tells us. But it may be said to discriminate perceptually insofar as reason (*ratio*) is operative in and through it. See the text marked by n. 159 below. Also note *De Quaerendo Deum* 2 (35) and 3 (38), as well as *Compendium* 13 (42).
153. "... and is the Quiddity of each individual": see n. 135 above.
154. *DI II*, 2 (104:15-20).
155. *De Beryllo* 6.
156. Aristotle, *Metaphysica* I, 1 (opening sentence). Cusa, *Idiota de Sapientia* I (9:3-4). *Compendium* 2 (4:13).
157. *De Beryllo* 37 (end).
158. Romans 1:20.
159. See n. 152 above.
160. Plato, *Phaedo* 98A-C.
161. Aristotle, *Metaphysica* I, 4 (985^a18-21).
162. Romans 9:23.
163. That is, perceptible objects qua *perceptible* objects would be removed. Objects as unperceived—and, by hypothesis, as unperceivable—would not be removed.
164. Aristotle, *Metaphysica* IV, 5 (1010^b30 - 1011^a2).
165. Psalms 83:8 (Psalms 84:7).
166. II Corinthians 3:5.
167. Hebrews 1:2.
168. Here Nicholas reaffirms his view that the senses are a receiving power whose actual images represent material objects. See n. 125 above.
169. See n. 16 above.
170. See *De Beryllo* 5:5-6, where the three cognitive modes are mentioned. Perceiving is a cognitive mode (involving imagination, reason, and intellect).
171. See n. 19 above.
172. Plato, *Epistola* VII (341C-D). See Nicholas's *De Theologicis Complementis* 1:14-15.
- Nicholas makes no technical distinction between the meanings of "*scientia*" and "*cognitio*"; he tends to use the terms interchangeably. Cf. *De Beryllo* 70:9 with 71:1.